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Brahmasri Subbarama Dikshitar
(1839—1906)

The Last Scion of the Dikshitar Family

By

T. S. PARTHASARATHY

During December 1983 the Madras Music Academy published the fifth and final part of the Tamil script edition of the 'Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini' of Subbarama Dikshitar to describe which, the only approximate English expression would be 'monumental'. The two volumes of the Telugu original, printed with specially-cast types at the Vidya Vilasini Press, Ettayapuram in 1904, comprise, among other subjects, the following and extend to 1700 pages :

1) The biographies of persons noteworthy in the history of music from the times of Sarngadeva (13th century) to those of Subbarama Dikshitar himself ;

2) Two sections devoted to the science of music viz. the Sangita Lakshana Prachina Paddhati and the Sangita Lakshana Sangraha ;

3) An exhaustive tabular statement of Ragas - Raganga, Upanga and Bhashanga - with their murcchanas ;

4) The main text of the work giving the 72 melas and their janyas with their raga lakshanas, explanation of special characteristics, their lakshana gitas, sancharis and illustrative compositions ;

5) 170 gitas of Venkatamakhi, 229 kritis of Muthusvami Dikshitar, 10 prabandhas, 41 chitta tanas, kritis of various

composers and over a hundred other pieces like Suladis, Varnas, Svarajatis, Darus, and Padams including some in Tamil.

The Pradarsini is thus the most massive thesaurus of information on Carnatic music and like the Dictionary of Dr. Johnson, it was compiled single-handedly by Subbarama Dikshitar.

With grants-in-aid from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Music Academy commenced publishing the Tamil script edition from 1961 and completed the voluminous work by the end of 1983.

I had the privilege of editing the fifth volume and seeing it through the press. As I went on checking the manuscript, my esteem for Subbarama Dikshitar rose sky-high and I was overwhelmed with wonder at his unique scholarship, research acumen, insatiable curiosity and honesty of purpose. For these qualities, he can be compared to Dr. V. Swaminatha Iyer, the doyen of Tamil literature. Both were orthodox Brahmins belonging to the old school and ways of living, but few modern scholars can compete with them for their modernity of outlook, integrity and prodigious industry. Dr. Iyer trod from village to village in search of manuscripts while Dikshitar, living in the remote village of Ettayapuram down South, collected, like the honey-bee, information from every possible source and stored it up. One should remember that there were few

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printed editions of musical texts in his times and he had to collect data from manuscripts which he seems to have acquired in good number. In fact, when Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, the lakshanakara of Hindustani music, met Dikshitar at Ettayapuram in 1904, he was able to collect from the latter the manuscript of the 'Chaturdandi Prakasika' of Venkatamakhi which he carried to Bombay and got printed there.

Illustrious Family

Like the Bach family of Germany, the Dikshitar family of Tamil Nadu, has rendered yeoman service to music. The patriarch of this family was Ramasvami Dikshitar who was born at Virinchipuram in 1735. He belonged to the Autra Vadamma community of Tamil Brahmins. Owing to the unsettled political conditions of the Kanchipuram area, the family left Virinchipuram around the year 1742 and settled down at Govindapuram near Tiruvidaimarudur. Ramasvami lost both his parents one after another but somehow managed to do Veda adhyayana and learn Sanskrit and Telugu. He had a predilection for music and became the disciple of the great Virabhadrayya at Thanjavur to learn vocal music. He later practised the Vina under the guidance of Venkata Vaidyanatha Dikshitar, who belonged to Venkatamakhi's family, and became an authority on the 'Chaturdandi Prakasika' of Venkatamakhi. He was honoured by the then ruler of Thanjavur. Ramasvami Dikshitar settled down at Tiruvarur and was patronized by Muthukrishna Mudaliar of Manali near Madras. He was a composer in his own right and has left a large number of sparkling compositions like varnams, darus and kirtanas besides ragamalikas, his 'Natakadi vidyala' being one of the longest ragamalikas in Carnatic music. It is well known that he was

the first composer to write a prabandha in the Hamsadhvani raga which later became popular at the hands of Tyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar.

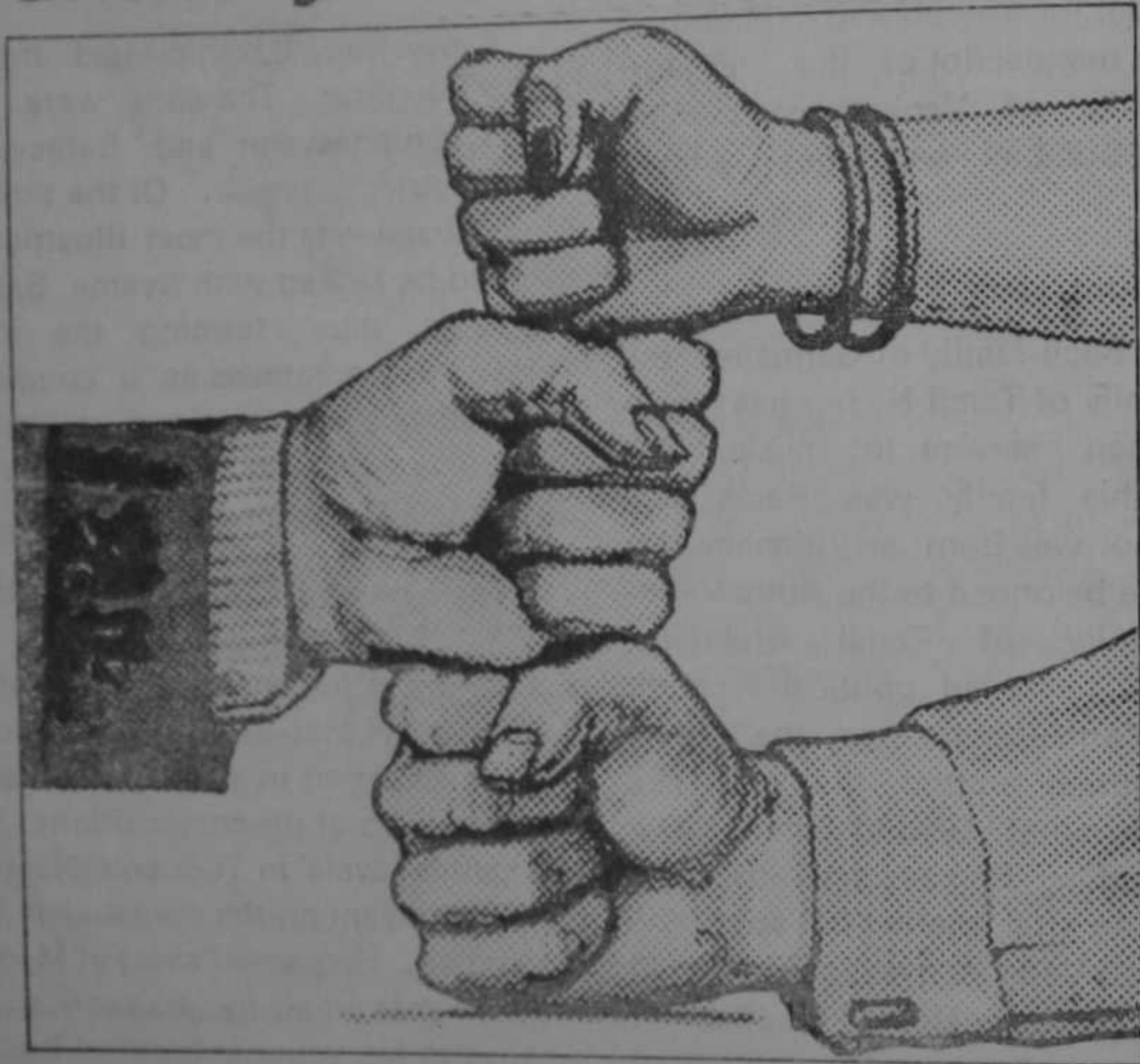
The Three Talented Sons

Ramasvami Dikshitar had three sons and a daughter. The sons were Muthusvami, Chinnasvami and Balasvami and the daughter Balamba. Of the three sons, Muthusvami was the most illustrious and came to be ranked with Syama Sastri and Tyagaraja, thus forming the immortal Trinity. His greatness as a composer is too well-known to need reiteration in this article which, in the main, deals with Subbarama Dikshitar and his work.

The next son, Chinnasvami Dikshitar (1778-1823) also appears to have been a scholar, musician and composer and was honoured by Manali Chinnayya Mudaliar. He was an expert in singing the Nagasvarali raga. Two of his compositions, 'Ganalokaruna lavalala' in Todi and 'Narayananda' in Kalyani on the divine sage Narada are known. He passed away at Madurai in his 45th year when he was on a pilgrimage with his younger brother Balasvami Dikshitar.

Balasvami Dikshitar (1786-1859) was the last of the brothers and was a versatile personality. His original name was Balakrishna. He was a Telugu scholar and an adept in playing the Vina, Svarabat, Violin, Sitar and Mridangam. He was also a musicologist. Manali Chinnayya Mudaliar arranged for Balasvami to learn the Violin from an European violinist at Madras for three years and Balasvami then switched over to Carnatic music. After the death of his brother Chinnasvami at Madurai, Balasvami migrated to Ettayapuram where the ruler, in recognition of the former's proficiency in music,

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appointed him as the Asthana Vidwan and music teacher to his son Kumara Eddappa. Eddappa later became the ruler of Ettayapuram and showered gifts on Balasvami Dikshitar for his extraordinary talent in composing various kinds of compositions. It is common knowledge that Muthusvami Dikshitar later joined his brother at Ettayapuram and passed away there in 1835.

Balasvami, a Sterling Composer

Seven Telugu compositions of Balasvami Dikshitar are extant and they are of sterling quality. These comprise a Tana Varna, three kritis and three darus. He was perhaps not a scholar in Tamil and merely set to music a chauka varna, a padam and a svarasthana padam in Tamil written by Kadigai Mukku Pulavar. Balasvami was an expert in blending the svara and the sahitya in an exquisite manner. Unexpected turns, yati patterns, and small but tricky makutams are the remarkable features of his varnas. The long pauses in his Chalanata varna are noteworthy. Rudrapriya seems to have been his favourite raga and he composed two pieces in this raga with beautiful chitta svaras. In fact, chittasvaras appear to be his speciality, his *magnum opus* being the chittasvara to Kumara Eddappa's Todi kriti 'Gajavadana'. The Tamil svarasthana padam has a chittasvara of two avartas which, when sung as a whole in the reverse order, gives back the same chittasvara.

Balasvami's compositions are not very popular because of the element of "nara-stuti" or human glorification in them. Most of them are in praise of the rulers of Ettayapuram. But musicians like him perhaps thought that there was nothing wrong in this as the rulers were not only mere patrons but scholars and connoisseurs of a high order and there was great

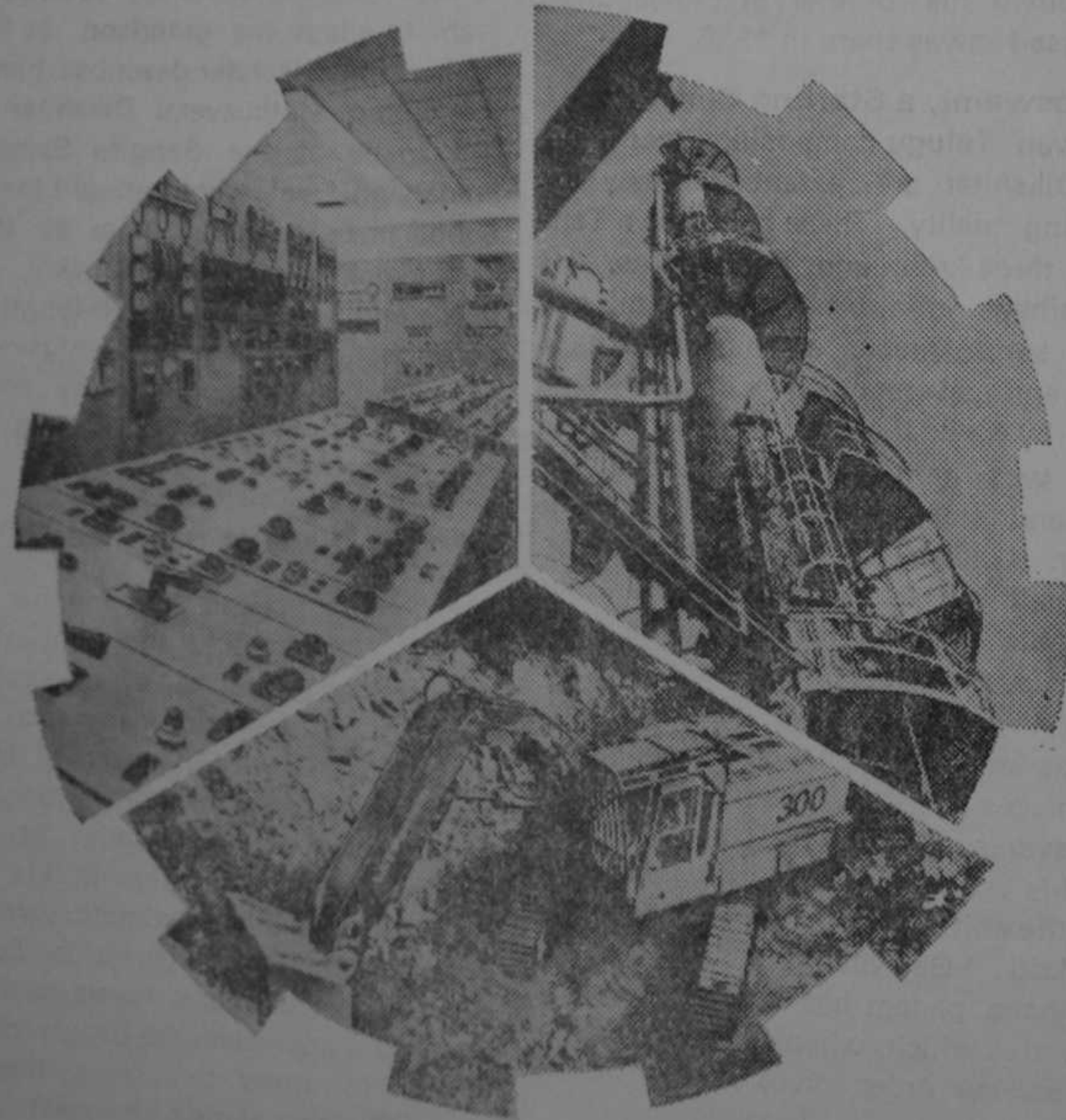
affection and rapport between the Vidwan and his patron.

Subbarama Dikshitar, (1839-1906) the last scion of this illustrious family, was the grandson of Balasvami Dikshitar through his daughter Annapurni. As the three Dikshitar brothers had no male issue Kumara Eddappa Maharaja advised Balasvami to adopt his grandson as his son. (Subbarama Dikshitar describes himself as the 'son of Muthusvami Dikshitar' in the title page of the Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini). Balasvami brought the young Subbaraman to Ettayapuram at the age of five and taught him Sanskrit, Telugu music and Vina. (For a full-length article on Subbarama Dikshitar as a musicologist, composer and author, vide my contribution to the issue of 'Shanmukha' dated October 1976.)

Saga of Sacrifices

Coming back to the 'Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini', the publication of this veritable reservoir of musical compositions is a saga of many sacrifices on the part of A. M. Chinnaswami Mudaliar and Subbarama Dikshitar. Mudaliar was an official in the Secretariat at Madras and his greatest ambition in life was to collect and publish authentic versions of great masters like Tyagaraja in European notation so that music lovers in the Occident could appreciate the beauty of Indian music. In order to achieve this noble object Mudaliar started his quest for authentic versions of Tyagaraja kritis. He contacted the three main schools of pupils of Tyagaraja, examined manuscripts and heard versions sung by Vidwans. He found to his dismay that in most cases only the sahityas had been written down and not the notation, which if at all written lacked exactness. At last he found satisfaction in the versions furnished by

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Waiajahpet Krishnasvami Bhagavatar, direct disciple of Tyagaraja and son of Walajahpet Venkataramana Bhagavatar. Mudaliar managed to collect from the Bhagavatar as many as 600 (or 800) songs with notation. As regards their authenticity, Mudaliar wrote in his 'Oriental Music in European Notation' :—

“For the purpose of annotating Tyagarajayya’s works, which are by far the most scientific, charming, voluminous and variegated in all Dravidian music, the services of Krishnaswami Bhagavat, one of the most intelligent and trusted among the last pupils of the great master, have fortunately been secured and have proved to be of the greatest value and utility. The great loyalty and devotion with which he has preserved in its integrity every one of the productions of his Guru, the admirable precision and scientific accuracy with which he repeats every sangati in the same way as he first sang it, (a rare virtue among modern vocalists), “these are qualifications worthy only of such a disciple of such a Guru”.

Mudaliar now started publishing his collection in instalments as a periodical and sold it for one anna (about 6 paise) a page ! He set up a press of his own and spent all his savings in pursuing his self-imposed mission.

After completing about 60 kritis Mudaliar happened to meet Subbarama Dikshitar at Ettayapuram. When he requested Dikshitar to supply the kritis of Muthusvami Dikshitar, the latter pointed out the futility of publishing Carnatic music in staff notation or even in the ordinary SRGM notation without suitable symbols for the gamakas. Mudaliar temporarily suspended his work and decided to publish in collaboration with Dikshitar,

all the kritis of Muthusvami Dikshitar and others in the Telugu script with gamaka signs evolved by them. Thus came into existence, in 1904, the most precious of all treatises on music—the ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini’. But the tragedy of it was that Chinnaasvami Mudaliar, who had lost his sight, health and savings, did not survive to see his brain child.

The following gamaka signs have been used throughout the Telugu original of the ‘Pradarsini’ and later in the Tamil script edition by the Music Academy.

Kampitam	~	Kandippu	✓
Sphuritam	∴	Vali	∩
Pratyaghatam	∴	Etra Jaru	/
Nokku	w	Irakka Jaru	\
Ravai	∧	Odukkal	×
	orikai	∩	

The prodigious labour involved in writing the entire notation with these special symbols and seeing the pages through the press may well be imagined.

Precious Heritage

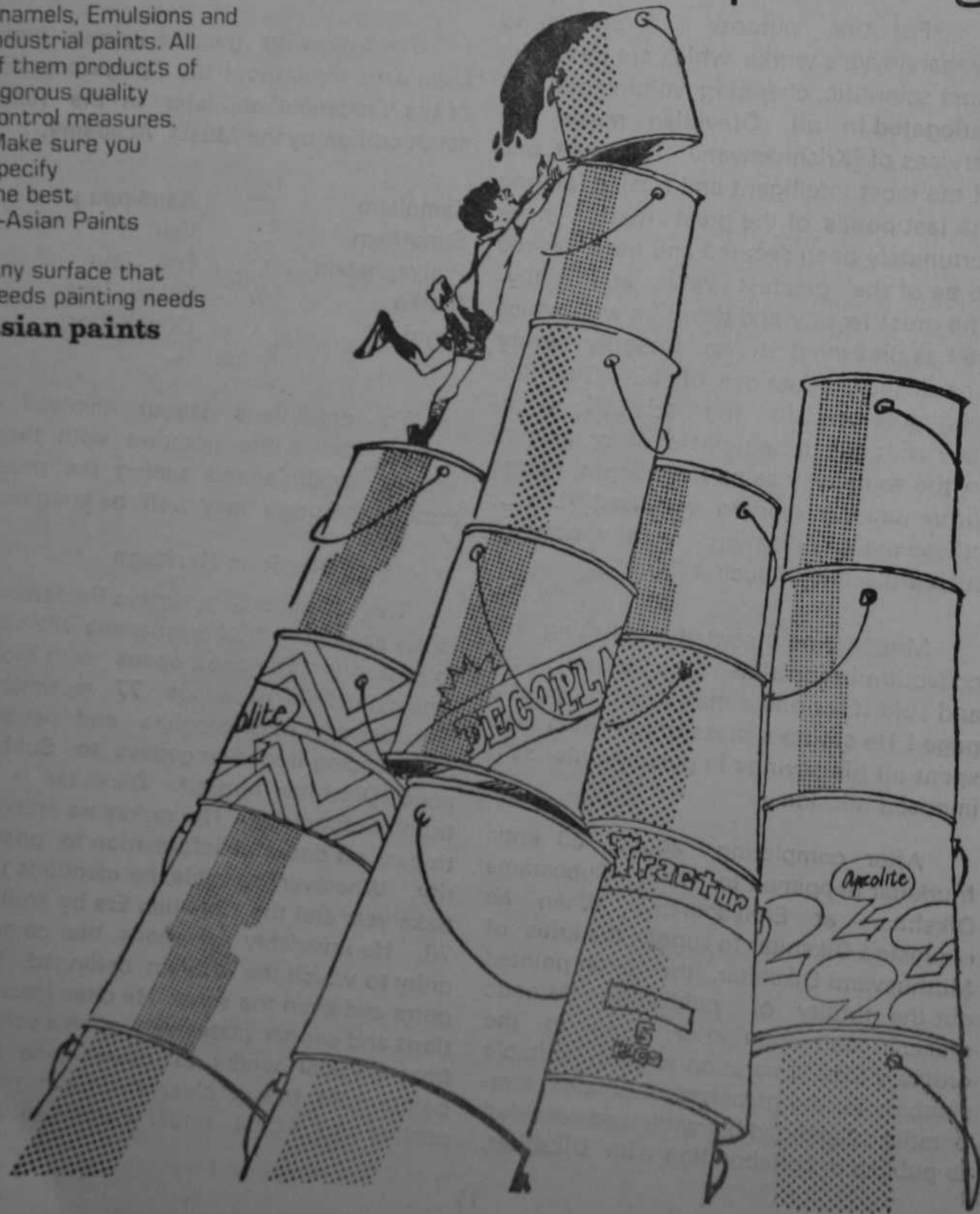
The ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini’ is the precious gift of Subbarama Dikshitar to posterity. The book opens with biographical details of about 77 musicians, composers, musicologists and patrons commencing from Sarngadeva to Subbarama Dikshitar himself. Dikshitar is a truthful chronicler. He makes no attempt to pass on doubtful information to posterity. Wherever possible, he mentions the Saka year and the Christian Era by adding 78. He invariably mentions the community to which the subject belonged, his gotra and even the sutra. He cites inscriptions and copper plates and quotes verses from original works to drive home his points. He has a clear historical perspective and where actual dates are not

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available, he gives the approximate period. He has given valuable information about his own (Dikshitar) family but admits that he had to seek the help of one S. Radhakrishnayyar, Principal of the Pudukottah Maharaja's College, for details about Tyagaraja. The following are interesting tid-bits from the biographical portion.

1) He mentions 1775 as the year of birth of Muthusvami Dikshitar but does not mention the month or the date. He nowhere states that Muthusvami Dikshitar was exposed to Hindustani music during the latter's five-year stay at Benares.

2) His statement that Giriraja Kavi was the maternal grandfather of Tyagaraja has been disproved by later research at the Sarasvati Mahal Library at Thanjavur. Giriraja Kavi was different from Giriraja Brahmam, the paternal grandfather of Tyagaraja.

3) When Subbarama Dikshitar, as a young man, sang his compositions before H. H. the Sankaracharya at Kumbakonam, the audience consisted of Vina Subbukutti Ayya (grandson of Pachimiriam Adiappayya), Tirumalarajan pattinam Ramudu Bhagavatar (the author of the Bhajana tunes of Ashtapadis) and Tirukkadaiyur Bharati, disciple of Muthusvami Dikshitar. This enables us to decide the dates of these musicians.

4) Subbarama Dikshitar says that Ghanam Sinayya, the author of padams with the 'Mannaru ranga' mudra, was a Sri Vaishnava, patronized by Vijayaranga Chookanatha Nayak of Madurai. Dikshitar quotes from a Telugu prabandha 'Sasanka Vijayam' composed by Sinayya, who was perhaps a contemporary of Kshetrjna.

Part V of the Pradarsini, recently published by the Music Academy, contains

a total of 16 ragamalikas, composed by members of the Dikshitar family in Appendix 'A' and 55 variegated compositions by 28 composers. In addition to the Trinity and other well-known composers, the following less known composers are introduced to the music world:

Muthukumara Pulavar
Kuppuswami Ayya
Ayyasami Nattuvaranar
Svayamprakasa Yatindra
Venku Bhagavatar
Venkatesvara Eddappa Maharaja
Srinivasayya
Vaikuntha Sastri
Akkul Swami
Jaganatha Chetti
Dorasamayya
Giriraja Kavi
Panchapagesa Bhagavatar

Epilogue

Before I close this article I wish to give the reader some idea of the versatility and industry of the savant Subbarama Dikshitar who was 70 when he commenced compiling his magnum opus. By then he had emerged as the greatest musicologist of the 19th century, overshadowing Rajah Saurindra Mohan Tagore, V. N. Bhatkhande, Chinna-swami Mudaliar and Abraham Panditar.

He composed sancharis for all the Raganga and Janya ragas set to Tala, eight Tana Varnas, one Jatisvaram, one Svarajati, two Chauka Varnas, one Pada Varna, one Pada, three Darus, one Svaras-thana Pada, 11 Kritis and 10 Ragamalikas. The ragas covered include rare ones like Paraju, [Maruva, Nagagandhari, Bala-hamsa, Natanarayani, Nagasvaravali and Yamunakalyani. But his master-piece is

the Raganga Ragamalika 'Ee Kanakam-bari' which covers all the 72 Raganga ragas of Venkatamakhi. One Krishna Kavi (most probably his Telugu teacher Vilattikulam Krishnayya Amatya) wrote the sahitya for this Ragamalika. In this feat, he stands on a par with Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer who wrote the 'Mela Ragamalika' following the Kanakangi nomenclature. Dikshitar also rendered into

Tamil prose the Mahabharatam in Telugu verse composed by the three poets Nannayya, Tikkana and Errapragada. But the supreme sacrifice he made in his life was his parting with his precious musical heirloom. Mudaliar's appeal to Subbarama Dikshitar was to put down in writing and notation *everything* that he knew "without hiding anything" and Dikshitar implemented his promise to the last letter.

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Derivation of ragas and the factors conducive to their melodic individuality

By

Sangeetha Siromani Prof. S. R. JANAKIRAMAN, B. A.

Music is the language of pure and sweet sounds. Every language has got its own literature and music should be no exception.

Ragas constitute the sound literature of music. They keep the art of music fully dynamic, while the literature of languages remains static in the sense that they remain only written in dumb letters but only to be enjoyed visually. But the enjoyment in both the realms appeals to the heart too, in the one case by reading and in the other by listening. The literature of the languages evokes all the 'nava rasas' but music is by itself only the language of pure emotions and feelings through the medium of sound-language.

John Ruskin refers to "books" as 'books of the hour' and 'books for ever'. So too in music, there are ragas which have gone into oblivion and ragas surviving the test of time. Ragas of momentary pleasure and ragas of perennial worth and value abound in our music.

Aesthetics of Ragas

The academic, technical and the aesthetic conceptions of the raga have been brought out in its essence in the very definition of the term 'raga' as given for the first time by Matanga in his 'Brhaddesi'.

'Swara varna vibhushitaha' implies the magical network of combinations of swaras permitted and combined on the four-fold 'Varna'. 'Yosau dwani viseshastu' and 'Ranjakojana chittanam'—these bring out immediately the musical aesthetic of ragas.

Any single swara may be pleasing as per the classic definition 'Swaro Ranjayati' and 'Swaram yo rajate'. But combinations of sounds need not have the same effect. There must be an element of 'pick and choose'. It is only here one must realise that though the ragas may be numberless—'Ananthascha ragaha'—not all can possibly or positively have equal quantum of rakthi or intrinsic melodic worth. The relative amount of rakthi is based on a number of salient factors analysed in the forthcoming paragraphs. Scales are legion and ragas are to be created out of them.

All Comprehensive

It is an acknowledged fact that our raga system is all comprehensive and all embracing in character and it is hardly possible for any human genius to conceive of any scale at any time in any part of the world which would not fall within the ambit of our system of music. This statement is not only qualitatively true but also quantitatively.

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Scales may be :

- I. Heptatonic : In both the ascent and the descent individually
- Such heptatonic scales may be purely homogeneous in character or heterogeneous individually.
 - Again, the heptatonic scales with a regular order of ascent and descent.
 - Such of those heptatonic scales with a regular order of ascent and descent and of a purely homogeneous character may be:
 - Suddha Panchama Melas numbering 72
 - Suddha Vikruta panchama Melas numbering 36
 - Heptatonic scales with a regular order of ascent and descent individually of a heterogeneous character:
 - Suddha Panchama Misra Melas numbering 5184
 - Vikruta Panchama Misra Melas numbering 1296
- Thus the possible number of heptatonic scales in general are 6480

- e) Formula for finding the swaras
- Suddha Panchama Misra Mela

$$72(n-1) + n$$

$$72(n^2-1) + n^2$$

The well known 72 melas (Suddha Panchama) are included in the scheme of 5184.

- Vikruta Panchama Misra Mela

$$36(n-1) + n$$

$$36(n^2-1) + n^2$$

- II. a) Hexatonic, Pentatonic and Quadratonic scales
- Hexatonic—6 noted structure.
 Pentatonic—5 noted structure.
 Quadratonic—4 noted structure.

- b) Possible scales out of hexatonic and pentatonic character.

(1) Sampurna—Shadava	...	6
(2) Shadava—Sampurna	...	6
(3) Sampurna—Audava	...	15
(4) Audava—Sampurna	...	15
(5) Shadava—Shadava	...	36
(6) Audava—Audava	...	225
(7) Shadava—Audava	...	90
(8) Audava—Shadava	...	90

Such Scales number 483

c) Swarantara Scale Patterns

(1) Sampurna—Swarantharas	20
(2) Swarantara—Sampurna	...	20
(3) Shadava—Swarantara	...	120
(4) Swarantara—Audava	...	120
(5) Audava—Swarantara	...	300
(6) Swarantara—Audava	...	300
(7) Swarantara—Swarantara	...	400

Such Scales are 1280

d) Method of arriving at number of hexatonic, pentatonic and quadratonic patterns.

(1)	$\frac{6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2}{1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5}$	$\frac{720}{120}$	= 6 (Shadava)
(2)	$\frac{6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3}{1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4}$	$\frac{360}{24}$	= 15 (Audava)
(3)	$\frac{6 \times 5 \times 4}{1 \times 2 \times 3}$	$\frac{120}{6}$	= 20 (Swarantara)

III. All the above hexatonic, pentatonic and quadratonic patterns are possible from out of the homogeneous and heterogenous scales.

6480 × 483	=	31,29,840
6410 × 1280	=	82,94,400
		<u>1,14,24,240</u>

All the above are only academic and mathematical possibilities. Even there, more than two-thirds will be cases of merger or repetition. e.g.

Valaji under 6 melas.

Mohana under 4 melas.

Nagaswaravali under 6 melas etc.

Vakra Ragas cannot be numbered.

IV. Other methods of derivation of scale having a thorough practical bearing and musical initiative and intelligence.

- (1) Ragas conceived purely as a result of musical initiative and instinct.
- (2) Quest of musical knowledge for finding newer scales, experimenting upon the known musical intervals.
- (3) Grahabheda — model shift of tonic.
- (4) Redistribution and reallocation of the sruties or intervals.
- (5) Applying the known scale pattern under different melas.
- (6) Finding out pratimadhyama counterparts.
- (7) Reversing the scale structure.

Contributory factors conducive to the melodic individuality of the ragas are :

- (1) Fullness of the scale but the regular structure of the formation need not necessarily guarantee the full melodic worth of the ragas.
- (2) Most of the rakthi ragas are only vakra and they are the pride and glory of Carnatic music. Ragas of such type seldom exist in any other system of music in the world.
- (3) The nature of the deletion of the notes in between has its influence on the intrinsic melodic worth of the ragas.
- (4) Rakthi depends on the very combination of the notes brought to form the scale.

Eg :— A scale having the following notes can hardly survive : Shadja, Suddha rishabha, Pratimadhyama, Suddha Dhaivata and Kaisiki Nishada.

- (5) The Panchama and Madhyama Varja do not claim that much of stability.
- (6) The presence of some notes in the scale even without Samvadi counterparts give solidarity to the structure. Chatusruti Rishabha and Chatusruti Dhaivata are examples.
- (7) Vivadi combination has to be dealt with scrupulously carefully. Stress, leaping or judicious omission are to be adhered to according to circumstances.
- (8) Notes of prolongable nature as per the order of preference have relative degrees of rakthi :—
 - (a) Shadja, Antara gandhara, Suddha Madhyama, Panchama.
 - (b) Chatusruti Rishabha and Chatusruti Dhaivata.
 - (c) Sadharana gandhara and Kaisiki Nishada.
 - (d) Suddha Rishabha and Suddha Dhaivata.
 - (e) Pratimadhyama and Kakali Nishada.

- (9) Ragas deriving good amount of rakthi by plain rendering of the inherent notes.
- (10) Ragas having a characteristic sheen by means of absolutely delicate rendering of the inherent notes.
- (11) The quantum of rakthi available on the highlighting or focusing the inherent swaras in their different capacities as graha, amsa, nyasa, alpathva and bahutva
- (12) Survival of the fittest ragas. The significance of the unquestionable pre-eminence and the undoubted and guaranteed existence for all times to come with reference to Sankarabharanam, Kharaharapriya, Harikambhoji, Todi, Kalyani and Natabhairavi and the derivatives thereof is all proof positive to substantiate the theory of the survival of the beautiful in music, as analogous to the theory of the survival of the fittest in other sciences.
- (13) The availability of Samvadi groupings has its tremendous influence on the quantum of rakthi in ragas.
- (14) The Panchama varjya deficiency could be made up by the presence of Dhaivata and Nishada and similarly the deficiency of Madhyama may be made good by the occurrence of Rishabha and Gandhara.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RAGAS AVAILABLE IN OUR MUSIC :

- (1) Ragas observing scrupulously the scale structure having derived melodic entity.
- (2) Ragas purely depending upon their scale structure and are developed only as swara patterns woven.
- (3) Ragas the melodic from of which lies much and far beyond their scale structure which proves an insignificant factor.
- (4) Ragas suitable for Geeta, Alapa, Thaya, and Prabandha.
- (5) Ragas fit for compositional purposes.
- (6) Ragas suitable for alapanakrama alone.
- (7) Ragas eminently suitable for all types of compositions and ragas only for a few specific types.
- (8) Ragas providing an elaborate scope for treatment on account of intrinsic melodic worth or treated only as a network of swara combination.
- (9) Ragas of an admittedly limited scope may be from the view point of :
 - (1) Structure]
 - (2) Melodic Worth
- (10) Ragas suitable for different tempos or specific tempos.
- (11) Ragas capable of evoking multiple rasas or with any specific rasa or rasas particularly attached to them.
- (12) Gana rasa-pradhana ragas.
- (13) Ragas suitable for all spheres of music or to a specific sphere;

Veena Kuppier, Illustrious Disciple of Thyagaraja

By

Smt. NAGALAKSHMI, Member of the Staff of Shanmukhananda Vidyalaya.

Veena Kuppayyar, the most distinguished disciple of Thyagaraja, was born in 1798 at Tiruvottiyur in Tamil Nadu. On account of his extra-ordinary skill in handling the raga Narayanagowla, he was also known as "Narayanagowla Kuppayyar".

Kuppayyar was a Tamil Brahmin. His father, Sambamurthi Sastri, was a great musician and vainika. Kuppayyar, also a violinist, learnt music and veena from his father. He was given the title 'Gana Chakravarti' for his proficiency in the different systems of music. He held the veena in the vertical posture and played. He composed simple Kritis as well as Kritis of an advanced nature. Deriving inspiration from his guru, he also composed divyanama kirtanas, which should possess a minimum of four charanas set to the same music. He was an adept in composing tana varnas. The unique and scholarly varnas 'Magnvaninne Kori' in Narayanagowla and 'Vanajaksha ninne Kori' in Ritigowla-Ata tala stand as testimony to his mastery over these ragas and his musical insight.

Veena Kuppayyar was a great devotee of Radha Rukmini-Sameta Sri Venugopala-swami - his family deity. Because of his devotion to the family deity, he signed his pieces with the 'ankitam' "Gopaladasa". He was with Thyagaraja for a long period and learnt the art of composing songs.

An Overkeen Sishya
When Kuppayyar came to Thyagaraja

as his disciple, he never disclosed to him that he was an expert vainika too. He was however, longing for an opportunity to play on Thyagaraja's veena. One day when the guru and his other disciples had gone out, Kuppayyar took the long awaited opportunity to play on his guru's veena. When Thyagaraja returned, he was captivated by the splendid and delightful music. The Sishya with trembling hands prostrated before his guru and begged him to forgive him for playing upon the instrument without the guru's knowledge and permission. He was of course forgiven.

Thyagaraja, at the invitation of his disciple, visited Tiruvottiyur and there in praise of the presiding deity Tirupurasundari Ambal, composed the Tiruvottiyur Pancharatnam comprising the songs 'Kannatalli' - Saveri, 'Darini Telusu Konti' Sudha Saveri, 'Sundari ni divya' - Kalyani, 'Sundarinannindarilo'-Begada and 'Sundari-ninuvarnima' - Arabi.

Kuppayyar was the Samasthana Vidwan of Kovur and enjoyed the patronage of Sundara Mudaliyar, when Thyagaraja visited Kovur. Here the great saint of Tiruvaiyaru composed the Kovur pancharatnam consisting of the song 'Sambo Mahadeva'(Pantuvavali), 'I Vasudha nivanti' (Sahana), 'Kori Sevimpā' (Karaharapriya) 'Nammivachi' (Kalyani) and 'Sundaresvaruni' (Sankarabharanam).

Kuppayyar visited Mysore during the reign of Sri Krishnaraja Wodeyar III and

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composed the Kriti 'Intaparakelanamma' in Begada raga Rupakatala, in praise of Sri Chamundeswari of Mysore. This kriti contains a beautiful Chittaswara,

His familiarity with Western music, which he acquired by listening to the performances of the European band played from Fort St. George, Madras, has been illustrated in the last *ettugada* Swara of his Varna 'Intachouwka' in Bilahari raga. This particular Swara passage can be harmonised and performed.

Prolific Composer

Kuppayyar composed two groups of Kritis - Kalahastisa Pancharatnam and Venkatesa Pancharatnam. Kalahastisa Pancharatnam contains the Kritis, 'Koniyardina na pai' - Kambodi, 'Nanubrovovada' - Sama, 'Birana nannu brova' - Hamsadvani, 'Samaganalola' - Salagabha - ravi, 'Sevintamararamma' - Sahana, all set to Adi tala. The kritis constituting the Venkatesa Pancharatnam are: 'Mammu brochu' - Simhendra madyamam, 'Nannu brova' - Mukhari, 'Sarojakshuni' - Saveri, 'Nivedikkani' - Darbar and 'Bagumiraganu' - Sankarabharanam.

All the above compositions are in Telugu. The name of the deity Kalahastisa

or Venkatesa or the synonym Nagarajagirinivasa, Seshagirinivasa, as the case may be, occur in all the Kritis. Veena Kuppayyar decorated his kritis with interesting Solfa passages. His musical compositions have been published in the book "Pallavi Swara Kalpavalli", by his son Tiruvottiyur Thyagayyar.

Great Disciples

Among Kuppayyar's disciples may be mentioned Tiruvottiyur Thyagayyar, Kottavasal Venkatarama Iyar (Composer of the popular Navaragamalika varnam and Saveri varnam) and Fiddle Ponnuswami (Composer of the well known varna 'Taruni ninne' in Khambodi raga - Adi tala).

Veena Kuppayyar lived for 62 years. During the latter part of his life he settled down in Madras. His house in Muthialpet, Madras, became a musical centre and many musicians and composers derived inspiration by coming into contact with him. It was he, who was mainly responsible for making Madras a seat of musical culture. Eminent sangitha vidvans from the South visited him and Madras city came to be the big arena for performing musicians - a status it keeps to this day.

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Events Concerning and Organised by the Sabha

American Consul's visit

The Sabha was 'AT HOME' to the American Consul in Bombay, Mr. James A. Becker, on 18th December 1983.

Welcoming the Guest of Honour on behalf of the Managing Committee and the Board of Trustees, Sri. S. Seshadri, the Vice-President of the Sabha said :

" On behalf of the Managing Committee and the Board of Trustees of the Sabha, it is my pleasant duty to extend you a hearty welcome to our institution, the biggest cultural organisation in our country having 5800 members on its rolls. Our objective is to give maximum benefit to the members of the Sabha and the community, at large at minimum cost. A great asset of the Sabha is its beautiful and magnificent edifice, our 'SHANMUKHANANDA HALL' - "biggest east of Suez", to quote Pandit Nehru, with a seating capacity of over 3000. Yet another proud asset of our Sabha is its Music School with 700 students. Besides these cultural wings the Sabha renders a substantial community service by running a Medical Centre which gives free medical consultancy services especially to the poor and down-trodden in the neighbourhood. The Sabha publishes a prestigious quarterly magazine 'SHANMUKHA' devoted to Indian classical music, dance and drama.

The Sabha Hall has had the unique privilege of staging concerts of such world famous artists as the famous Yehudi

Menuhin, Zubin Mehta, some Austrian and Russian Ballet troupes, all of whom had warm words of praise for our Hall".

Mr. Becker thanked Sri Seshadri and the members present warmly. Later, he wrote a letter of appreciation which is reproduced herewith :

Dear Mr. Sheshadri :

This is to thank you and your board members in the managing committee for the warm welcome accorded to me during my visit to the Shanmukhananda Hall on December 18. The dance performance by Smt. Hemamalini was most enjoyable and I look forward to attending many more such programs.

During our brief meeting in your boardroom, you were kind enough to highlight the various activities of your organization. I am delighted to learn that besides being a focal point for the development of arts and culture in Bombay, your institution has extended its outreach to community service by setting up a medical center, music school including publication of "Shanmukha" the music journal.

Coming to think of it, there are very few institutions in the world today doing this kind of noble service. I am

in a position to make this statement as a result of long years of overseas assignments.

I am deeply convinced that organizations such as yours are binding factors of the society at large, and in the process strive to enrich human beings into healthy persons both socially and culturally. I was deeply touched by your kind words.

I understand that your committee members include very senior executives from different walks of life and it is remarkable to see them devoting some time for developing and nurturing a great organization. During my visit to your society I could see for myself the dynamism and enthusiasm of some of them.

If the US Consulate-General could be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Mr. V. Rangaraj, Senior Commercial Advisor on phone. Visiting your Sabha was an experience by itself. With regards,

Sincerely yours,
James A. Becker
American Consul

The Hony. Secretary of the Trust Board, Shri N. Parameswaran Proposed a vote of thanks.

Picture on page 27

'TSP' felicitated

Eminent musicologist and research scholar and the Hon. Secretary of the the Music Academy, Madras, Shri T. S. Parthasarathy, was felicitated by the Sabha on 26th January 1984.

Welcoming Shri Parthasarathy, Shri Seshadri recalled with gratitude the helpful role played by him in organising the Music Seminar of the Sabha for the first time about two years ago and also the moral and editorial support extended by him to the Editor of the Sabha's Journal 'Shanmukha'.

Veteran Vidwan Shri Sandhyavandanam Srinivasa Rao was also felicitated on the occasion.

Both Shri Parthasarathy and Shri Srinivasa Rao thanked the speaker for his kind references. The Hon. Secretary of the Sabha, Shri K. S. S. Mani, proposed a vote of thanks.

Madras Music Competitions - Sabha Sangeetha Vidyalaya's student wins prizes

It is a matter of pride for the Sabha's Sangeetha Vidyalaya that its student Miss Kalyani Panchapakesan, had successively won in 1983 also a number of coveted First Prizes, Three Second Prizes and one Special Prize, all in vocal music and a First prize in Violin in the Music Competitions held by the Music Academy and the Indian Fine Arts Society, both of Madras, in December 1983.



Mr. James A. Becker, American Consul at Bombay with Managing Committee members

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Sadguru Thyagaraja Day

A three-day festival was organised by the Sabha in January 1984 to celebrate Saint Thyagaraja's 137th Aradhana. The Bombay-based vidwans, the Principal and Staff members and the students of the sabha's Sangeetha Vidyalaya and of the Vidyalayas of sister institutions took part in the singing of the Pancharatna and other kritis of the Saint.

Saint Purandara Dasa and Shri Shyama Sastri Days :

Similarly a one-day function was organised in celebration of the 'Purandara Dasa' day on 1st February 1984 and 'Shyama Sastri' day on 12th February 1984,

Thanks to Shri A. Kandaswamy, Convenor of the Utsava Sub-committee of the Sabha, the celebration was a success.

PRIZE WINNER



Miss Kalyani Panchapagesan

Shanmukha

Wishes its Readers

A Happy Tamil New Year

The Peerless Balasaraswathi

"How can we know the dancer from the dance?"—W.B. YEATS

"When Ranji batted, a strange light was seen for the first time on English fields"—so wrote an esteemed critic of the game. "The ordinary man casts a shadow. In a way we do not quite understand, the man of genius casts light"—George Steiner said of Yehudi Menuhin.

Balasaraswati, who died on 9th February 1984 in her home in Madras at the ripe age of 66, too cast an effulgent light on the Bharatha Natya stage whenever she ascended it. Only great men and women end epochs, it is often said. With the passing away of this supreme artist, a great epoch of true, classical Bharatanatyam has also ended.

Universal Range

Some of her attributes may be found in other dancers, but it can be safely averred that none has her universal range. No one else attained the dazzling heights of great dance as Bala did. She was a legend even in her life-time and naturally every conceivable honour and title came to her—Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Padma Vibhushan, Doctorate honoris causa from the Rabindra Bharati University and the Sangitha Kalanidhi from the Music Academy, Madras, not to speak of participation in the Edinburgh, Jacob Pillow Festivals in U.K. The avalanche of glowing tributes paid to her during and after her life, even after making due allowance for the element of mandatory hyperbole indiscriminately heaped upon both good and indifferent artists in our country

after they die, was fully deserved. Not many dancers in India have received posthumous editorial notices from the great dailies in England and America as Bala has. Its significance surely is that Bala has put Bharataratyam firmly on the international map as no one else has.

Ancestry

It was Michael Angelo, the great sculptor who said that "no man or woman of merit is born into the world whose work was not born with him" Balasaraswati's ancestral roots went back about 200 years to Kamakshi (1810-1890), a dancer at the Tanjore Court, whose daughter was Sundarammal, a pupil of the great Subbaraya Sastri. The celebrated Veena Dhanam (1810-1938) was a daughter of Sundarammal and her daughter, the sweet Jayammal, was the mother of Bala. Music and dance dominated the culture of that household and Bala was steeped in that great music-cum-dance tradition. It was the very breath of her being.

What distinguishes Bharat Natyam from other dances including ballet is the important role the face and the eyes play, apart from the rigorous rhythmic sequences. According to Bharata, the author of Natya Sastra, dance is made up of Rasa, Bhava, Abhinaya, Dharmi (convention), Vritti (style), Pravritti (regional influences), Siddi, Swara, Atodya (Orchestral support), Gana (vocal) and Ranga (stage). It calls for a long and unremitting apprenticeship in which the artist is enjoined to develop high

will power and, yes, to avoid a temperamental outlook. Fortunately for Bala, her teacher, Kandappan, who was a descendant of Gangamuthu and of the late Chinnayya of the Tanjore Quartette, was a highly demanding practitioner of his calling.

Fine Debut

And Bala responded to his discipline with total commitment, hard work and instinctive genius. Dancing had become an embodiment of her being. She proved Michael Angelo right when her arangetram took place in her ninth year (1927) before an audience of the top 'laya' giants of the day like Konnakol Pakkiri Pillai, Tanjore Vaidhyanatha Iyer and other famous musicians of the period who gave her the accolade for her chaste, classical dance. Bala's career had started with a crimson glow.

Homage

In due course, her repertoire bulged with the most exacting Varnams, Padams, Jawalis and what is more, her singing became matchless in its virtuosity. The other day, at Sabridaya's 'Homage to Bala' meeting at Max Mueller Bhavan, Sri Sivanandam, great grandson of one of the Quartette, dispelled the lurking doubts in some circles that Bala's rhythmic precision in her later years was not as incomparable as her abhinaya. He denied this aspersion totally and mentioned that Bala's Nritya was time-tested and flawless. This insinuation would actually amount to a slur on the great Kandappa Nattuvanar, a perfectionist and an effective gadfly himself.

Queen of Abhinaya

Of course, it is Bala's abhinaya that has left indelible memories on her aficionados in India, Britain, Hawaii and U.S.A. Her interpretations of "Krishna nee Begane Varo", "Madura Nagarilo".

'Bala Vinave'. 'Jagaddodharana' and many other pieces were replete with bhava and splendour in unceasing counterpoint. In those portrayals, one witnessed the sublimation of mythology, character, mood and music into a magnificent whole. Lord Harewood observed, "her hand movements seemed to be 3-dimensional" and "she was one of the greatest dancers he had ever seen". Bala could translate the chaos and conflicts of temporal experiences into a world of beauty which is eternal. She was a master of subtle nuance. She achieved a fusion of intellect and emotion that made a direct appeal to the viewer-listener.

Audience Rapport

Her abhinaya was such a finished art form that one felt that her own artistic experience completed itself in the emotional response of the audience. In the presence of such a polished and moving display, the audiences identified themselves with Bala, who uniquely could enable them to enjoy the vicarious satisfaction of artistic creation and actually become participants in her display, not mere spectators. If other dancers could not measure upto Bala even remotely in this respect, it is possibly because they lacked both her capacity to explore all the possibilities of the medium (within strictly traditional parameters) and her intellectual power to organise in her own presentation the full gamut of human psychology and experience.

As a young dancer, Sarasvathi Srinivasan, pithily put it, "great dancers have more ideas per dance than most have in their entirety. That is why you can appreciate a great dancer over and over again. They can also be appreciated at many different levels of understanding as well as with a great diversity of interpretations." Bala could combine

shock, delight, rapture and sorrow with profundity. Yet she achieved unsurpassed beauties within the bounds of strict classical convention. What Shri Aurobindo said of the Mahabalipuram frescoes viz. "There is here a perfection of form with the perfection of significance" would apply equally to Bala's unsurpassed abhinaya skills. Shallow cleverness and vulgar bravura were unknown to her.

Soaring Music

Her singing exhaled serenity, tranquility and poise and acted as a shining raiment to her abhinaya, as though sound and visual were in tandem. When she sang, her audiences went into a trance stimulated by the immaculate sruthi and the silken sheen of her voice. Her gestures and the haunting quality of her music meshed very well and left unforgettable memories.

Thomas Hardy in "Dynasts" writes of the ultimate need for freedom of treatment, dispensing with even the theatre, etc. and concludes that "mental performance may eventually be the fate of all drama". In Bala's dancing, "mental performance" took precedence over everything else.

An Aristocrat

Bala, the individual, was always conscious of her unquestioned position at the top. She was ever gracious though she could also sport an icy disdain at times. She never sought publicity and chose to remain aloof from the madding world. She could afford a lofty perch. But she trained many pupils at the Music Academy and in the U. S. There was high mutual regard between the late Dr. V. Raghavan and herself.

Years ago, in her address to the annual conference at the Tamil Isai

Sangam, she spelled out her views on Bharatham clearly. One knew just where she stood—an uncompromising adherent to classical traditions, and one who, to her eternal credit, sincerely believed that culture is a continuum and not a competitive race for the laurels of originality or populist applause. Readers' attention is invited to her highly thought-laden address delivered some years ago at Hawaii to an international audience which is published in this issue. (Committee on Research in Dance (CORD)).

Bala retired from active life in the fulness of her powers and faculties. There is reason to think that latterly she was greatly perturbed by the steady all round deterioration in the standards and presentation of Bharatanatyam. Temperament, age and failing health precluded any crusade on her part to stop the rot, even if she could have overcome her natural reluctance to get involved in controversy of any kind. But the question of questions is: Do the spontaneous and unstinted tributes paid to Bala going round and round the world like sound waves from the Krakatova explosion, indicate a backlash against latter-day permissiveness in the teaching and get-up of Bharatham, against the absurdly inadequate preparation and training put in by girls before climbing the boards and overall, the scant regard shown for traditions and the newfangled features masquerading in the garb of innovation? One hopes that this phase is transient and that this great classical art of India will not be convoluted by charlatans and clever damsels whose chief assets are powdered faces, pleated dresses and puerile presentations. As Ernest Newman wrote, "versatility and enthusiasm can often do great harm in the arts and they need a self-disciplined rein." KSM

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Reflections

(On the art of dancing, in general, and Bharata Natya in particular) *

By

T. Balasaraswati

I take this opportunity to present a few of my reflections touching the art of dancing in general and Bharata Natya, the dance system to which I am blessed to belong, in particular.

What is dancing? Dancing is the natural, therefore universal expression of the human species whereby it finds its unity with the cosmos and its creator. The cosmos is the dynamic expression of the static source, the one Supreme Spirit, in orderly and beautiful movement. As God has created man in His own image, man, too, has the natural urge to fulfil his dynamism in an expression of orderly and beautiful movements. This expression takes the form of dance.

In the macrocosm, *Andaandam* as we call it, we witness the unceasing dance of the planets moving round the sun which is the hard core or nucleus of the solar system. On the other extreme, we also see within the minute atom the perpetual dance of the electrons moving about the proton, which is its hard core. This must necessarily be reflected in the microcosm, which we call *Pindaandam*. Here you have the soul or Self or *Atman* as the static hard core, which in the ultimate

realisation, is experienced to be the nucleus of not only the individual, but of every thing from the atom to the planets, suns and stars. This unmoving hard core-*Atman* of man, by the power and grace of which he moves is none other than God. The individual is basically the mind. The mind is ever in nonstop movements called thoughts. These movements can find their fulfilment only when they go around the *Atman* in perfect order and beauty. But unfortunately, while the dancers in the macrocosm and within the atom are orderly and conform to a pattern or beauty, the thought movements of the mind lack both. The mind seems to be hardly aware of its hard core. Without order and beauty, these mental movements flow in chaotic disarray. So man is not at peace either with himself or with the world at large. Though at the conscious level he acts thus, deep within the sub-conscious he is not satisfied and yearns to orientate his mental movements to the *Atman*, in order and beauty. In this effort he arrives at religious truths and practices which put him in the correct orbit around his Source. But this too, does not give him total satisfaction. Now comes to his succour the indefinable instinct of artistic creation, which makes him more natural than what he takes to be

* Text of the address delivered to the Committee on Research in Dance (CORD) at Hawaii in August 1978.

natural, by giving him the fulfilment which the so-called "natural" is not able to. His artistic expression takes to the form of dancing, with its free law of order and beauty of pattern. This wonderful art of dance imparts a discipline to his otherwise wayward mind. The rigour of the discipline is annulled for him by the joy of its beauty. Though outwardly the gestures and movements are physical, they conform to music and rhythm which belong to the domain of the deeply spiritual. So the body itself is transfigured as a symbol of the spirit and this art of dance enables man, too, like the planets and the electrons to become aware of his hard core and circle round it.

That is why dancing is a universal phenomenon, prevailing in all climes and times.

Physically man lives by dancing to the music of his breathing and the rhythm of his pulse-beat. Spiritually he gives meaning and purpose to this physical living by the art of dance with its music and rhythm.

This natural, spontaneous fulfilment through dancing has taken diverse forms of expression in various nations and cultures of the world, in keeping with the genius and milieu of each community.

I consider it an ennobling experience to see here representatives of many such dance-systems. Though we seem to be different as branches, we all have the same common stem of artistic fulfilment through bodily movement; all of us take root in the common universal yearning to miniature the orderly and beautiful dynamism of the One Over-soul. We are

united in our aim of expanding and elevating our minds to the vastness and height of the one Super-mind.

But unity, we know, is not uniformity. And the very life-breath of art is unity in diversity. So we have many dancing systems. I express my sincere admiration of all these systems.

Yet, you will understand my own personal involvement in and identification with that particular system of Indian dancing, called Bharata Natya, which is perhaps the most ancient of the dancing systems of the world.

I wish to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the salient features of Bharata Natya.

As far as my knowledge (or ignorance) of the various other dance-systems of the world goes, the purpose and purport of dancing—that is, of man's finding his essential hard core through the beauty of regularized movement—is realized mostly at the sub-conscious level; so that, at the conscious level, the dancer is not necessarily aware of its inner spiritual meaning. He or she may even take it as nothing more than an exalted experience in the sensual and sensuous.

It is here that Bharata Natya—the hoary and holy art of Indian dancing—cuts deep into the conscious and sub-conscious levels and revealingly brings to the forefront that it is ultimately and intimately oriented to the hard core, variously called the *Atman* of God. It is a revelation not only to the performing artiste; but, in an equal measure, to the audience also.

Bharata Natya achieves this primarily by its *abhinaya*, gestural interpretation of songs on divinities and divine themes alone. Secular subjects as ends in themselves are avoided in the choice of song and hymns for gestural interpretations.

Of course there is a purely rhythmic side to Bharata Natya called *Nritta* where there is no portrayal of sentiments, scenes and events, but only delicate and dexterous display of rhythm-patterns; no lyrical text, but only drum syllables. Here, too, while there is nothing outwardly divine there is also nothing secular. The *Nritta* part is utterly bereft of sensual movements. It is a world of art all its own. And art as art is of the spirit and, therefore, is itself divine, without its having to describe the divine. So here, too, the artiste and the audience feel the spirit-oriented aspect of dancing, but in a subtle way.

But this aspect is made more explicit in what constitutes the major part of Bharata Natya, namely *abhinaya*.

"More explicit", I said. That does not mean that the beauties of suggestion and subtlety are lost sight of, and the divine import is brought out nakedly. This is far from the truth. The divine is divine only because of its suggestive, subtle quality. So, in *abhinaya*, though the artiste and audience have the direct inward experience of the divine, the outward expression which is responsible for creating that experience is only suggestively and subtly so. Be it not mistaken that since Bharata Natya is God oriented it must be just like the austere and rigorous "religious dancing" in certain communi-

ties, which precludes most of the feelings and emotions as sensual. On the other hand, Bharata Natya is a veritable treasure house of the whole gamut of human experiences, emotions, feelings, sentiments and ponderings. All the nine essential basic sentiments which we call *rasa-s* namely *Shringara* (amorous love), *Haasya* (humour), *Shoka* (pathos), *Roudra* (anger), *Veera* (heroism), *Bhaya* (fear), *Beebhatsa* (disgust), *Adbhuta* (wonder), *Vaatsalya* (tender affection, as of a mother for her child)—all these with their innumerable attendant emotional conditions are expounded in Bharata Natya culminating and consummating in the tenth *rasa*, which is called the *rasa* of *rasa-s* namely *Shaanta* or tranquility. With God as the centre, all these emotions and feelings are also divinized and elevated from the level of the sensual to that of the spiritual. By the inexplicable power born of the union of music, lyric, rhythm and gesticulation, the feelings and emotions are released from their limited individualized locus and expanded to universal proportions where there is only pure spirit with nothing of the sensual.

A Bharata Natya recital from start to finish is so arranged as to make the body shed off its "body-ness", step by step, in the process of realising the divinity of the spirit encased within the body. Though it is an art blossoming entirely through bodily movements, these very movements enable the blossoming of the body to fructify into the fruit of the spirit.

Here I shall point out a remarkable feature of Bharata Natya. Most of the songs interpreted are couched in the

seemingly erotic language of the Lady Love (*Jivatma*) longing for her Lover (*Paramatma*), who, of course, is God.

Incidentally, this perhaps is an additional reason why Bharata Natya is mainly practised and performed by the 'fair sex'. The basic reason may be that the dynamic power of the self (*Shakti*) itself is always considered to be feminine and its static source masculine; Bharata Natya is one of the sixty-four arts and sciences mastered by anyone, including man, who wants to become a full scholar. Princes have been taught this art. The presiding Deity of Dance, Nataraja, too, is a male God. With all that, it has been mainly a woman's art. But it is *equally enjoyed and experienced* by men as audience. Later, I shall refer to the audience's active participation in the art. By the very fact of the lover being God, the union longed for is understood to be not of the physical but of the spiritual. It is the yearning of the individual soul for merger in the cosmic soul that is figuratively expressed in the erotic idiom. With this understanding, the dancer interprets the sensual in its spiritual setting. The spiritual quality of Bharata Natya, therefore, is not achieved through the elimination of the sensual, but through the seemingly sensual itself, thereby sublimating it.

This God-centred character of Bharata Natya is mainly fostered by the key role played in *abhinaya* by our mythologies, which we call *Puraana-s*. The songs have numerous references to *Puranic* characters and events. The mythological characters, especially the divinities, are not obsolete to us, but are more living

than those who live by our side. Many of us recite with devotion portions from our *Puraana-s* during our daily religious observances. We are never tired of listening to discourses on the *Puraana-s* by erudite scholars. We have our holidays to worship the various divinities. Our magnificent temple sculpture owes primarily to the *Puraana-s*. Above all, we love those divine characters not only as the sublime, but also as the sublime sublime simplified to our own level so as to sublimate us. Steeped as we are in our *Puraana-s*, the dancer considers it her unique good fortune not only to portray through *abhinaya* the devotee but the deity itself.

Later, I shall refer to improvisation in the Bharata Natya system. But here itself. I must point out that a very rich harvest of such improvisation is reaped by the artists from out of the fertile field of our mythologies.

It will be rather difficult for those without moorings in our *Puraana-s* to develop rapport with our dancers. Of course, insofar as the artist is absorbed and wrapped up in *Puraana-s*, her life-blood pulsating through the *abhinaya* will itself inspire a kind of understanding even in a foreign audience, at least for the dance.

There are among the various type of songs employed in *abhinaya*—such as *padam*, *varnam* and *jaavali*—some of which are in praise of the patron of the composer, often the king or chieftain. Even here, the King of Kings alone is taken to be the real hero of the song.

Moreover, the song will have glorious references to the tutelary deity of the patron. Now this particular part of the song will become the main plank of the artist for weaving episode after episode from our mythologies concerning that deity.

The dancer personates the deity, on the one hand; on the other hand, all the divinities of the Hindu pantheon have themselves danced on some occasion or other. So you have the dancing forms of many of our deities like Ganesha, Muruga, Kali, Saraswati, Krishna culminating in the Supreme Lord Shiva as Nataraja, the King of Dance.

Attesting to the divine orientation of Bharata Natya, it has come down the ages only by being nurtured in the temples as one of the many offerings to the Lord. Hereditary dancers called *devadasi-s* have dedicated the art to God Himself, performing it in His court.

This God-centred aspect is common to all the dancing systems of India like Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Odissi and Kuchipudi. All these systems derive from Bharata's *Natya Shastra*.

Another important feature of Bharata Natya is that the actual dancing is not the performance of a group or troupe, but of an individual artiste. Recent innovations in Bharata Natya include group-dancing with a number of performers doing different roles. But this comes more within the domain of opera than Bharata Natya proper. These recent innovations do not and cannot deprive Bharata

Natya of its essential nature of being a single artiste's performance. A troupe is there in the background to assist the dancer, to give her vocal and instrumental support. But the actual dance performer is, what may be called, a soloist. The one artiste herself takes the roles of the many characters in the compositions. Let it be noted that the dancer does not put on any make-up to physically personate any of the characters. She is in the typical feminine Bharata Natya costume portraying all the characters, including male. This also is another aspect of the art's suggestive quality. There are no scenic effects. The artiste herself has to create all this. It is a wonder that the single performer through her facial and other bodily expressions and the highly meaningful finger gestures called *mudra-s*, creates both the locale and all the characters. In split seconds the self-same artiste takes the roles of deity, devotee and even the devil.

It is here that Bharata Natya justifies its being called a Yoga, that is spiritual discipline of perfecting the mind to mindless serenity. The expertise of the artiste in such rapid change of far-differing moods enables her to gain the moodless equipoise of Yoga.

Another notable feature of Bharata Natya is that the songs are vocally rendered by the artiste and the background musician. It is not dancing just to the tune of instrumental music, but dancing to the words set to music. Yet it is not just dancing to the words in their superficial meaning alone, nor is the music detached from the words and their full (inner and outer) meaning. My point is that the

songs must be vocally rendered by the danseuse herself while she dances. Since she cannot do the singing with gusto because of the physical exertion of dancing, a background musician sings with her, and usually her dance master himself renders the drum syllables. Yes, these drum syllables must also be vocally rendered, even when they are not set to music as in the opening piece, *Alarippu*.

The artiste has to bring out through gesture not only the outer meaning of the words of the songs, but has also to interpret all their implications and inner meanings, sometimes even building up episodes around a single line. But all through this she must not change the actual words of the song that she is vocally rendering. Yes, even while she is enacting, in gestures, monologues and dialogues that are far removed from the actual words of the song, she must not utter the words fit for those situations, but only repeat the same actual words of the lyrical text. That is, whereas she is bodily, facially and figuratively gesturing myriad changing moods and environments she vocally adheres to the same unchanging phrases in the text. One more interesting feature here is that, though the words are the same, she makes endless variations (of sound or *abhinaya*) called *sangiati-s* in the music set for the words, variations which help to bring out the many shades of the inner meaning of the text. It is only when the artiste is a true musician and enters into the spirit of the song through music that she can interpret in gesture the song to perfection by simply keeping the movement of her hands and eyes in consonance with the ups and

downs, curves and glides, pauses and frills in the music, irrespective of the actual words of the song but in keeping with the dialogue woven in gesture around them. This is justified by quoting the dance-scriptures which, of course, admit *Vachikabhinaya*. But I sincerely feel that *Vachikabhinaya* belongs to drama and dance-drama and not to dancing sui generis. For I consider that this feat of achieving perfection simultaneously in the variation (in gesture and music) and non-variation (in the sung word) helps greatly in achieving strength and clarity of mind—which again is an important factor in Yoga. Another remarkable aspect of Bharata Natya is the great scope it affords to the artiste's imagination especially in the *abhinaya*. She can improvise *ad infinitum* moods and situations to bring out the full content of the song. Even in the *Nritta* part of rhythmic footwork, where the unity of music prevents her from taking too much liberty, she can to some extent express her native imagination in improvisation. As for the gestural part of *abhinaya*, her wings can soar to the very skies of freedom.

"Skies of freedom", I repeat, because I mean it. It is freedom through discipline, not freedom from discipline. It is not licentiousness of the individual mind, but it partakes of the nature of the liberty and grandeur of the cosmic mind. Strict adherence to the disciplines of the *Natya Shastra* (the scripture of Bharata Natya) and to tradition in each and every matter touching gesture, rhythm, music and all the other aspects is absolutely required. This strict binding on the outer individual mind itself releases the universal divine

mind encased in its innermost recesses—like the outer case of the rocket releasing the inner satellite up to the skies, free from the gravitational pull of earth. This is the "sky of freedom" to which I referred where echoes and emanations from the Master-Mind itself help the artiste to improvise. At its zenith, though it appears to be the individual's, the artiste gives up her individuality and surrenders to the Universal Principle totally.

Another noteworthy feature of Bharata Natya is the quality of the gestures. These gestures must never be taken to be the gestures used in everyday life or in drama and cinema acting. *Abhinaya* is as far from acting as poetry is from prose. No feeling, no emotion, no mood, no experience, no locale is gestured in a realistic, matter-of-fact way. They are all expressed in the suggestive language of the imagination. Forceful contortions and violent movements are out of place in Bharata Natya. Yet it does not just portray the soft side of life. The deepest and weightiest subjects are conveyed by suggestion in a more striking manner than through direct stage acting. Dignified restraint is the hall-mark of *abhinaya*. Even in the best of laughter, there is a restraint on the mouth movement even at the height of wonder, there is a limit for opening the eyes; even in the white-heat of amorous sport, the danseuse has no use for movements of the torso but gestures only through the face and hands. It is this decency, decorum and dignity that imparts to Bharata Natya its divine character.

The *hasta-s* or hand gestures may be said to be the alphabet of the suggestive

language of Bharata Natya. Many of these *mudra-s* are common to both the *Tantra-Shastra-s* and Bharata Natya. *Tantra-Shastra* is an arduous ordeal of religious disciplines meant to divinise the physical body in various ways, and here the *mudra-s* play an important part. The very fact that these same *mudra-s* occur in dancing alone bears testimony to the religious character of Bharata Natya. How these *mudra-s* acquire new meanings artistically in Bharata Natya is a subject which deserves study. Suffice it, if I point out a single example. The *mudra* of joining the tips of the thumb and the forefinger is called *Chin-mudra* in the religious scriptures, meaning the 'Sign of Wisdom'. It is the Wisdom of realising the oneness of the individual soul (signified by the fore-finger) with the One Over-Soul (signified by the thumb). Now the *Chin-mudra* is accepted in this scriptural sense in dancing also. But see what new meaning it acquires in addition. It is the 'Sign of wisdom, only when the palm is held in a graceful slant. The same *mudra* when the palm is held stiffly upright depicts the valour of the Bowman who holds the arrow between the two tinger tips. When, with the palm's back of the audience's view, the danseuse touches the mid-point of her eye-brows with this *mudra*, it conveys her putting on the mark of beauty, the *tilak*. So the same *mudra* stands for three such entirely different concepts as spiritual wisdom, valour and preparation for meeting her lover.

Bharata Natya gestures eliminate all the inessentials and depict concepts and objects strikingly by creating minimal sem-

blance to the original, mainly by virtue of the *mudra*-s. For example, in the other dancing systems, including the Indian systems other than Bharata Natya, an elephant is gesturally depicted only with a fund of details like its high and bulky size, pillar-like legs, winnow-like ears, resilient trunk with its different movements, majestic, gait etc. But see, how with the simple *mudra* of the four fingers—the stiffly bent first and fore-fingers signifying the tusks and the drooping middle two fingers denoting the trunk—the elephant is unmistakably suggested in Bharara Natya. Similarly a cow has to be gesturally presented in the other systems rather laboriously. But in Bharata Natya those same two fingers which stood for the elephant's tusks become the horns of the cow when tilted up perpendicularly, and the other three fingertips joined together picturize the face of the cow. and with a wave of the

right hand the danseuse also represents the cowherd who drives it.

So you will notice that there must be the participation of the audience, too in understanding and filling up the gestures which only suggest. This scope given for the imaginative faculty of Bharata Natya makes it an art to be appreciated and assimilated by the spectator, not passively or even intellectually but through artistic imagination bordering on intuition.

Bharata Natya is an art oceanic in width and depth. I just took you a few steps on its shore. I hope the vision you had of the ocean will inspire you to dive into it and cull its pearls yourselves (*With acknowledgements to the Journal of the National Centre for the Performing Arts*).

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News & Notes

The self-indulgence and sometimes profligate exuberance of instrumental accompanists one comes across in most concerts in Carnatic Music at the present day - an offence abetted by the excessive amplification demanded - have often made me ruminant about the intentions of the composer who created the piece - varnam, kriti, padam etc. Let it be remembered that the Veena and the flute were the only main instruments in vogue when the Trinity created their glorious music. 'How would the kriti sound if accompanied by those very instruments' is a thought that has probably occurred to many of us. If songs like 'Eti Janmamithi' (Varali), 'Dakshinamurthe' (Sankarabaranam), 'Mokshamu galadha' (Saramathi), "Sujana jeevana" (Khamas) are sung with only a Veena accompaniment, the musical impact of the songs may conceivably be much greater in terms of bhava, clarity of sahitya and certainly, melody. There is one recorded song of Dr. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer ("Dakshinamurthe") accompanied only by Sangita Kalanidhi Sri K.S. Narayanaswamy on the veena, which has a soulful appeal and has sold well in the West.

A Matter of Interpretation

The cardinal point is that such a set-up makes the listener all attentive and well attuned to the gamakas, glides and the mood of the composer which condition the mind of the rasika. So vital to the real music getting across. How often if at all, do the vocalist and his crew remember that they are, after all, interpreters of another's vision of something superb, projected through the music?

Taking excessive liberties with the songs tends to make them coarse. Of course great things ought not to be trifled with, is a residual thought.

In the U.K. and U.S.A., lately there has emerged a group of musicians who have decided to let 'Mozart be Mozart' and try to perform his pieces with instruments corresponding to the period of the music. (1756-1791) This ginger group is shocked at what the modern orchestra has done to Mozart - "the string section *blasts* out its parts on violins and cellos; the wind instruments are *louder* and more penetrating than classical flutes, oboes and clarinets; the piano with its *booming bass* is worlds removed from its 18th century forerunner. In this welter of sound, delicate balances are destroyed, inner voices lost - the result is a distorted reproduction of an art work" ("Time" Magazine), abetted by electronics.

The Revisionists

A band of dedicated revisionists are engaged in studying how compositions were meant to be played on instruments of their period. Christopher Hogwood, Director of England's Academy of Ancient Music, has actually made a cassette of Mozart's from which the sense of excitement produced is immediate and infectious, it seems. The original instruments movement has already affected the way standard repertoires are performed. It is a lively, *avantgarde* movement. A number of such instrument ensembles has also sprung up in England and U.S.A. Original works are being revealed for what they are and meant to be.

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How one longs for such fresh breezes to blow through the musty, noisy corridors of Carnatic music ?

Dhananjayan's Courage

Exigencies of printing came in the way of a detailed reference in our January '84 issue to Sri V. P. Dhananjayan's courageous and thoughtful thanksgiving address at the Krishna Gana Sabha when the "Biridu" of 'Nrithyachoodamani' was conferred on him in December 1983. Normally, thanking is treated as a dull but necessary chore and it is even considered to be a mark of modesty to be excessively brief !

But canny dancer Dhananjayan seems to be cast in a different mould. He waits for honours to come to him as indeed any true, self-respecting artist should. Some worthy suggestions made by him on that distinguished occasion were : (1) The press especially the dailies, should give pre-views on dance, music and drama concerts, thereby helping to focus public attention on worthwhile cultural events. (2) Criticism of concerts, dances etc by reviewers should be constructive. (3) Big businessmen and commercial houses should come forward to sponsor programmes. Sri Dhananjayan deplored the apathy of businessmen in Madras in this respect. He acknowledged however, that Sri S. Viswanathan, Managing Director of Enfield India Ltd. was a brilliant exception. Through the Kalamandir Trust, Sri Viswanathan has set in motion a phase of resurgence in dance and this season, many a young, impecunious but talented dancer got a chance to show her skills. Certainly some very promising talent was spotted. Sri Dhananjayan did not however, mince

words when he condemned the indecent haste of some young and not too mature dancers to perform in Sabhas anyhow. All very talented artists are bound to be recognised (as did happen in his own case) and therefore, they should concentrate on achieving a name by total dedication to the art.

It was rather amusing to note that Shri Dhananjayan's straight-from-the-shoulder remarks created a stir in some dovecotes and others, who are more used to fawning by artists than respected by those with a full measure of self-respect and independence. Congratulations Sri Dhananjayan !

D. K. Jayaraman & Palghat Raghu

These are days when artists of established stature not only make their pile but obtain the highest awards and national honours. D. K. Jayaraman's music, by any standard, deserved recognition. So, too, Palghat Raghu, most eminent of Palghat Mani Iyer's sishyas, has maintained the dignity, culture and technical excellence of his great guru over many years. Both were the recipients of the Sangeet Natak Akademy's award this year. The delay in receipt of this award is well compensated by the enhancement of the cash award from Rs. 5,000 to 10,000.

Rukmini Devi

The Kalidas Samman award has gone to Rukmini Devi this year for her immense contribution to the maintenance and improvement of the classical arts of dance,

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drama and music through the hallowed instrument of Kalakshetra. Rukmini Devi now in the eighties is as vibrant and dynamic as ever and the recently completed Kalakshetra Theatre, built on our hoary temple traditions of architecture and with modern acoustics, is a monument to her vision of the cultural future of India.

Kalakshetra is on the international tourist map and attracts all foreigners who have a genuine interest in Indian art and culture at its best. And though weighed down by the immense responsibility of maintaining Kalakshetra's aesthetic momentum, partly because of paucity of financial resources and partly due to declining health, Rukmini Devi's intense commitment is no less and her vision remains undimmed. Writing in "The Young Citizen" in May 1949 when she was weighed down by the responsibility of making plans for moving in June 1950, from the estate of the T. S., she could still say; "Yet I go on happily for I have the inner knowledge that this work is blessed, and even when there is no help or money, I find the energy and enthusiasm to carry on..." She was inspired by a vision of India's future in which, in her words, "Art is not merely for the Art Gallery; art is not meant only for those who are specialising in art. Art must belong to every single individual; it must belong to the daily life of the people."

What greater ideals can anyone concerned with India's artistic and spiritual development have than the bold way in which Rukmini Devi once spelled these out:

"If I were in charge of India, no Indian should have a foreign home.

I would take away vulgar music from the concert houses and cinemas, because it has a demoralising effect upon the people. I would insist that all temples, mosques and shrines of India should become centres radiating their influence of culture as in the ancient days when dancers gave their first recitals in the temples and poets their readings."

As Schiller said "All art is dedicated to joy and there is no higher and no more serious problem than how to make people happy. The right art is that alone which creates the highest enjoyment". Rukmini Devi's whole life has been and is still a quest for that happiness of the people. May the almighty give her strength and long life to achieve her objectives!

The Kalaimamanis

The Tamil Nadu Iyal Isai Nataka Manram bestowed the insignia of "Kalaimamani" on a large cross section drawn of leading artists, from the fields of literature, music, dance, drama, films, sculptures. Among them are Sri V. Thyagarajan, Violinist, Sri D. K. Jayaraman, the vocalist, A. Gayathri the Veena player who was hailed as a prodigy, Sri K. R. Radhakrishnan, the dance teacher, and Smt. S. Rajeswari, Bharath Natyam musician, Sri K. Bhagyaraj, famous actor, Producer, & Y.G. Mahendra, actor son of Y.G.P. We congratulate the recipients on the recognition they have had from the government of Tamil Nadu. Sri D. V. Narayanaswamy, an artist in his own right, has through his personality and unremitting efforts, made the Manram a mirror of the art & culture of the State. We congratulate the winners of the awards and also the Manram. KSM

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Studies in the Compositions of Muttusvami Dīkṣitar—V

THE NAVAGRAHA KṚTIS—II *

By

“SĀHITYARATNA” P. K. RAJAGOPALA AIYAR

The next kṛti that Dīkṣita composed in his bunch is “*Divākaratanujam*” (Yadukulakāmbhoji rāga—Eka tāla) in praise of Lord Śrī Śanaīścara. Being the son of the sun (दिवकरतनुजम्), He represents the fire of Ātmajñāna, that will burn and split asunder the wheel of time (i.e., of Fate) or the cycle of samsāra of the jivas (कालचक्रमेदचित्रभानुम्). The term चित्रभानु denotes that fire.

His mother is Chāyā Devī, who was shaped up by Samjñā, who designed Her to impersonate Herself in Her absence (कल्पितच्छायादेवीसूनुम्). The Harivamśa (IX Chapter) relates that Samjñā, the daughter of Viśvakarman was the original wife of the sun and mother of Yama and Yamunā. On the eve of Her departure to Her father's house, She created a woman exactly like Herself—Who was, as it were, Her own shadow (and was therefore called Chāyā), and putting Her in Her own (Sanjñā's) place, went away without the

knowledge of the sun. Chāyā bore to the sun three children, the two sons, Sāvārṇi and Śanaīścara and one daughter Tapanī.

Being farthest away from the earth amongst all the planets in the Zodiac,¹ He takes the longest span of time, i.e., no less than thirty years to finish a complete revolution along His orbit around the sun. That is why He is called मन्द and शनेश्वर. Further, He symbolizes the coalescence of the Śiva tattva and the Śakti tattva by the svara parivartana of the prathamākṣara of the Śiva dala of the Pañchākṣara mahāmantra, viz., न and that of the Śakti dala of the same mahāmantra, viz., शि. That is by the āropaṇa of the dakṣiṇa netra nyāsa svara mātṛkā, viz., the इकार (i.e., the Śakti liṅga) embedded in शि, upon नकार, thereby moulding it into नि, the syllable शि now gets reduced to श. As the *summum bonum* of the operation of the above parivartana, is derived the cognomen शनि² which is the popular term obtaining in common

¹ सर्वेषामुपरि नक्षत्राणि तदधश्शनेश्वरः तदधो गुरुः तदधो भौमः तदधो रविः तदधश्शुक्रः तदधो बुधः तदधश्चन्द्रः इति ग्रहाणां कक्षाक्रमः ॥

—Bṛhatsamhitā.

² N.B. The बीज of शनेश्वरग्रहदेवता mantra is शं, and its शक्ति is नं.

* The first article in this series was published in our April 1981 number.

parlance denoting Him. Thus शनि is tantamount to नशि in the Mantra Śāstra. नशि is नमश्शिवाय. “नशि—मशि” is a docket code denoting the samputīkaraṇa of the bijas constituting the mantra.

Further, the very term “Śani” is a name of Lord Śiva. “Śanimahāpradoṣa” is the evening worship of Lord Śiva performed on the thirteenth day of the lunar fortnight when it falls on a Saturday, which coincidence denotes a particular pattern of focussing the concentrated Energy of Time (कालशक्ति); and as Energy is identified in the mantra śāstra as a female principle, the Energy (शक्ति) of Time (काल) is termed काली. Anything which is beyond human understanding is denoted as “dark” (काल). Therefore, the Energy of Time (कालशक्ति), being *ununderstandable*, is also termed काली¹ (the “dark”).

In the scheme of the saṅga ārādhana of the Parabrahman, such as worship in a vighraha, bāṇa liṅga, śālagrāma, pratimā etc., the ardhayāma (a period of an hour and a half) just preceding midnight (10-30 to 12 midnight) being the first in the reckoning (coinciding with the शयनोत्सव or दोकोत्सव), the thirteenth is the one just preceding the next day’s dusk fall (4-30 to 6 p.m.), termed निशामुख. Thus the thirteenth ardhayāma of every such महोरात्र is प्रदोष. But that of the thirteenth tithi in every pakṣa (the lunar fortnight) i.e., the त्रयोदशतिथि is termed महाप्रदोष, held very sacred to Lord Śiva. That is why Dikṣita expounds the

truth that aspirants who, on account of their devoted propitiation, have earned the grace of Lord Śiva (the consort of Kālī), are exceedingly favoured by Śani with the most auspicious effects in life :

भवानीशकटाक्षपात्रभूतभक्तिमताम् अतिशयशुभफलदम्

Now, in this world, plenty of pure water is an indispensable desideratum for comfortable living. That is why the vaidika mantra of Śani appeals to Him to bestow on the world of jivas abundant pure water and lasting happiness :

शन्नो देवीरभिष्टय आपो भवन्तु पीतये ।

शैयोरसिञ्चन्तु नः ॥

—Rgvedasamhitā-X-9-4.

Further, Śani controls the winds : vide Varāhamihira :

शिखिभूखपयोमरुद्गणानां वशिनोभूमिसुतादयः क्रमेण ॥

—Bṛhajjātaka-II-6.

... परुषरोमकचोऽनिळात्मा ॥

—Ibid-II-11.

The winds bring about the rains : Thus, it is Śani who showers the nectar of pure (distilled) water on all living beings. That is why the above Veda mantra appeals to Śani for pure water. Rain clouds are borne by the winds. Says the Taittiriya Samhitā :

ये तु नद्यो वर्षन्तु पर्जन्याः ॥

So also avers Lord Śri Kṛṣṇa—

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।

—Bhagavadgītā-III-14.

The sun converts the waters of the oceans and other reservoirs into smoky vapour i.e., cloud (पर्जन्य), which pushes on being buoyed across along the atmosphere by the winds. In its turn, the cloud changes into rain. Production of food is dependent on the availability of water, and it should be pure. That is why the chant of Varuṇa-sūkta is invariably followed by that of the Parjanya sūkta in fervid prayers to the Almighty for the favour of rains.¹ This accounts for the appeal to Śani for pure water.

Besides, Śani confers on the devotee such a high sense of responsibility and steadiness of purpose that a Saturnian never fails to fulfil his undertaking (धीरतरम्)², remaining unperturbed despite disturbing environments :

विकारहेतौ सति विक्रियन्ते येषानचेतांसित एवधीराः ॥

—Kumārasambhava—I-59.

Being the kāraka for the bibhatsa rasa (बीभत्सस्य शनैश्चरः |), i.e. the sentiment of disgust and aversion, He graces those per-

sons who resent the travails of trivial material pleasures, which cater only to the indriyas, and elevate their minds Godward.

दोषेक्षणदिभिर्गर्हाजुगुप्सा विषयोद्भवा ॥

—Sāhityadarpaṇa—207.

जुगुप्सास्थायिभावस्तुभीभस्सः कथ्यते रसः ॥

—Ibid—236.

Likewise, bestowing on sincere devotees utter freedom from passion and worldly attachment, He is terrible to those who are immersed in the ocean of samsāra, and inflicts on them horrid ordeals :

भवाम्बुनिधौ निमग्नजनानां भयङ्करम् अतिकूरफळदम्

But he rids the sincere and virtuous devotee of all fear (निर्भयम्). Being verily an ocean of the ambrosia of mercy (दयासुधासागरम्) He resembles the divine cow Kāmadhenu in fulfilling the longings of aspirants (कामितार्थ-फलदकामधेनुम्).

Being Himself of a rich dark blue hue (कालाञ्जनकान्तियुक्तदेहम्)³, and dressed in black robes and decorated with dark blue flowers (नीलांशुकपुष्पमालावृतम्), He is fond of the blue-black gem, the sapphire

¹ प्रवाता वान्ति पतयन्ति विद्युत् उदोषधीर्जिह्वेते पिन्वते स्वः ।

इरा विश्वस्मे भुवनाय जायते यत्पर्जन्यः पृथिवीं रेतसावन्ति ॥

—Parjanyasūkta-4.

दिवो नो वृष्टि मरुतो ररीध्वं प्रपिन्वत वृष्णो अश्वस्य धाराः ।

अवडितेनस्तनयिस्नुनेह्यपो निषिञ्चसुंरः पिता नः ॥

—Ibid-6.

² धीराय नमः ॥

—Śani Aṣṭottara.

³ वर्णास्ताम्रसितातिकहरितव्यापीतचित्रासिताः

• • • सूर्यादिनाथाः क्रमात् ।

—Bṛhajjātaka—II-5

¹ कालशक्त्या सर्वमिदं जगत् परिचाक्यति इति काली ।

(नीलरत्नभूषणालङ्कृतम्). Makara rāṣi represents the ज्ञानु, i.e. the knee of Kālapuruṣa.¹ Being the structured joint connecting the two principal parts of the leg, viz. the thigh and the shank, the knee is one of the essential limbs functioning in sañcāra. Likewise, the kumbha rāṣi represents the जङ्घा, i.e. the shank. Sustaining the function of the knee, the जङ्घा is also another of the principal organs in the process of movement. Both these limbs are therefore of prime importance in the motion of living beings. Thus, persons born in these two rāṣis stand out as bulwarks of the social structure and are invariably noted for their unstinted selfless social service.

The legend goes that just as Śiva punished Yama with a kick for the crime of molesting Mārkaṇḍeya, the staunch Śiva-bhakta, Lord Śrī Kāla (Lord Śiva in His manifestation as the Destroyer of the Universe)² once struck Śani on the knee with His cudgel (काकदण्डपरिपीडितजानुम्), which resulted in the limp in His gait, engendering His मन्दगति. He is the lord of the मकर³ and कुम्भ³ rāṣis, i.e. the karma and lābha bhāvas of Kālapuruṣa (मकरकुम्भराशिनाथम्), that is,

He grants assiduity and sincerity of attempt and commensurate achievements and acquisitions. Any person attains the status of a leader by sheer maximum परोपकार and selfless service. Śani, as the lord of the Makara rāṣi, represents such service: That is why the Śabdaratnākara terms Śani as ग्रहनायक.

Now, Dikṣita points out both the inauspicious and auspicious aspects in the personality of Śani (भयङ्करम् अतिक्रूरफलदम्—अतिशयशुभफलदम्). Being the lord of the ekādaśa sthāna (viz. Kumbha) of the bhachakra of Kālapuruṣa, Śani would surely dispense terrific miseries on sinful jīvas.⁴ Likewise, being the lord of the daśama kendra sthāna (viz. Makara), and that too, Makara being the tenth bhāva, i.e. the most advanced and therefore the strongest kendra sthāna, Śani would not bestow harmful effects, but would confer unexpected lucky turns of surprisingly happy effects on meritorious jīvas.⁵

Śani graces the intellect of the devotee to blaze with the flame of ātmajñāna. That is why He is represented as being

fond of lamps burning with gingely oil and as relishing food soaked in that oil, since the oil of sesamum kindles and nourishes the energies of the brain cells which nurture the intellectual faculties and promote the concentration of the mind (विकृतैलमिश्रितान्न-दीपप्रियम्).¹

That He symbolizes the divine trait of the restraint which a person of mental balance imposes upon the ply of his indriyas, his desires and passions in particular, and exercises effective control over his longing for the enjoyment of pleasures, is the truth underlying His being represented as the younger brother of Lord Yama (काकसहोदरः) The adhidevata of Śani is Yama:

शानैश्चरस्य तु यमं राहोः कालीं तथैव च ।

—Samskāratāntrā.

He is the पितृकारक for jīvas born by night: Yama is the eldest son of Sūrya, who is the पितृकारक for jīvas born by day. The appellation काकवाह indicates not only His swarthy complexion but also His symbolic representation of the manes. The ancient tradition of वायसवलिदान is still an important feature in श्राद्ध amongst Hindus.

Bloomed into a full-fledged Dikṣita, having received the Śrīvidyā Upāsana pūrṇa dikṣā abhiṣeka from his guru Cidambārānandanātha at Vāraṇasī, with the dikṣānāma Cidānandanātha, Dikṣita had the rare fortune of being graced by Lord Śrī Skanda at Tiruttāṇi (परिपूर्णाचल शान्तादि),

which shrine he visited at the behest of his guru, with exemplary vāk and a unique capacity to compose excellent Sanskrit compositions bristling with abundant musical beauties (technical as well as aesthetic) and literary flourish. The benign and bounteous grace of the all-merciful Lord Śrī Skanda showered on Dikṣita deep intuitive penetration into the upāsana krama of all other devatas—which is an exceptional feature in his personality. In the upāsana paddhati of Lord Śrī Skanda, there are seven āvaraṇas, in the wake of which there is a specific mantra called Mālinī, of which Dikṣita had attained siddhi, which immensely pleased Śrī Skanda (मालिनीविनुतगुरुगुहमुदितम्.)

Now, the rāga Dikṣita chose for this kṛtī is Yadukulakāmbhoji: Govindācārya also spells it as यदुकुलकाम्भोजि—

हरिकाम्भोजितो यदुकुलकाम्भोजिसम्भवः ॥

—Saṅgrahacūḍāmaṇi—III - 30

Anyway this is how its name is pronounced today. But Subbarāma Dikṣita spells it as Erukalakāmbhoji and quotes the following śloka as of Veṅkaṭamakhin:

आरोहे गनिवर्ज्यस्त्वात्सग्रहस्सार्वाकालिकः ।

स्याद्देवकलकाम्भोजी रागस्याहुर्महात्मभिः ॥

—Saṅgītāsampradāyapradarśini—p. 807.

The faulty grammar in the above verse is palpable. The active verb आहुः followed by महात्मभिः (in the तृतीयाविभक्ति) which requires a passive verb—certainly this is

¹ दीपने बुद्धिदे . मेध्यं . . विकृतैलं प्रशस्यते ॥

—Bhavaprakāśa.

¹ काकाङ्गानि वराङ्गमाननमुरोहकोडवासोभृतो ।

वस्तिर्भ्यञ्जनमूरुजानुयुगले जङ्घे ततोऽद्भिद्रवम् ॥

—Bṛhajjātaka - I-4

² कालः काल्या भुवनाफलकेकीडति प्राणिशारैः ॥

³ मकं - भूषणं - राति इति मकरः ।

कुं - भूमि - उम्भति - पूर्यति - इति कुम्भः ॥

⁴ पतयस्त्रिषडायानां यदि पापफलप्रदा ॥

—Jātakachandrikā—5

⁵ न दिशन्ति शुभं नृणां शुभाः केन्द्राधिपायदि ।

क्रूरश्रेदशुभं त्वेते प्रबला उत्तरोत्तरम् ॥

—Ibid—6

not from the pen of Venkātamakhin, the Pāṇini of Karṇāṭak Saṅgita. The rāga is not mentioned in the body of the text of Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā: It is found only in the Anubandha to the Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā (Music Academy edition, which is the only edition extant) which gives a different wording of the above śloka, but faultless in grammar:

आरोहेगनिबर्ज्यश्च समहस्सार्वकालिकः ।

स्यादेरुकुलकाम्भोजीराग इत्युच्यते बुधैः ॥

—Anubandha to Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā—
Music Academy edition—p. 14 sl. 12.

But the Anubandha differs in many respects from the Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā. The authenticity of the Anubandha has been proved to be unfounded. “The Rāga-lakṣaṇa” (so-called) printed as an Appendix to the Madras Music Academy edition of the Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā is not the work of Venkātamakhin.

King Tulaja of Tanjore also spells it as Erukakāmbhoji:

काम्भोजीमेलजा बेरुकलकाम्भोजिसंहिता ।

सम्पूर्ण समहन्त्यासा सायंगेया प्रकीर्तिता ॥

—Saṅgitasārāmṛta—X

—Rāgavivekaprakaraṇa

Thus, its earlier popular name was Erukala (or Erukula) Kāmbhoji. But today it is Yadukulakāmbhoji.

But the rāga is a very ancient one, being referred to as the Śevvazhippan by Ilaṅgo Aḍigal (2nd century A.D.)

“செவ்வழிப் பண்ணிற்
சிறைவண்டரற்றும”

—Śilappadikāram—II-11-87.

The free and wide swing of the very starting phrase of the composition—S D.; D n d d P—holding on the dhaivata for a considerable length and deflecting it downwards, is the ply of the patent Āndolita (आन्दोलित) and Dhālu (ढालु) gamakas, so characteristic of the rāga Yadukulakāmbhoji, the image of which at once jumps up in the vision of the rasika, as is the stamp of Dikṣita’s style, especially in a predominantly naya (and therefore rakti) rāga like this. And the start of the Anupallavi also grips the dhaivata, a jīva svara of the raga; and the constant and profuse streaming of the jīva svaras is Dikṣita’s wont.

Employing the distinguishing rañjaka prayogas like—s p D S;—in अतिक्रूर in the Anupallavi, r m g s in the madhyamakāla sāhitya कटाक्षपात्रभूत adorning the Anupallavi and in कालचक्र in the starting phrase of the penultimate āvartta of the madhyamakāla sāhitya at the end of the kṛti s r Mmgg m P in कालाञ्जन in the opening phrase of the of the caraṇa, s r r p Mpm M; in वाहम् at the end of the first pāda of the caraṇa, nDnS, n D in भूषणा ० ० ० in the last two āvarttas of the second pāda of the caraṇa, p m pd sp-snD nd P in सागरं in the last two āvarttas of the sāmakāla sāhitya of the Caraṇa, ṛgsr nd-mpdS in भेदचित्रमानुं and in P d r snD pdS in कल्पितच्छाया in the last two āvarttas of the madhyamakāla sāhitya adorning the caraṇa, pdM PŚ; sn in मकरकुम्भ in the penultimate āvartta of the third pāda of the caraṇa, and S, r M mg-G, m P—mpD d m P—in गुह्यगुह्य-मुदितम् just in the middle of the samakāla

sāhitya of the caraṇa, Dikṣita establishes the individual svarūpa of the rāga in unmistakably distinctive lineaments.

This rāga being essentially a Karuṇārasa-pradhāna one, the leisurely vilambita style of Dikṣita eminently suits the mood of the composer in delineating the underlying purport of the entire composition in evoking the mercy of a strictly disciplinarian master like Śani. The compass of the composition is two octaves, extending from mandra pañcama to tāra madhyama. And, Yadukulakāmbhoji being a very elastic rāga, affording vast scope for a wide range of treatment, and with Dikṣita’s infinite capacity to develop gamaka varika rakti rāgas, his masterly handling and vivid presentation of Yadukulakāmbhoji, elevates the kṛti—the entire composition viewed as a whole—to the level of a model of perfection. At the same time, the musical structure is not complicated. Further, the gamakas figuring in it nourish the framework of the composition with flesh and blood.

The tāla chosen for the composition is Caturaśra Eka tāla: This is Māna tāla. Māna¹ is pramāṇa, i.e., आयुष्प्रमाण. The highest vaidika āśirvacana is वेदोक्तं दीर्घमायुः Śani is आयुष्कारक. Dikṣita’s choice of rāgas and tālas for his compositions is exemplary and final: There is no alternative for them.

But Subbarāma Dikṣita mentions the tāla as Ādi Tāla and renders its svara notation as such. Dikṣita, immersed in ancient lore that he was, thought and expressed his ideas always in terms of usages

that had obtained of yore. The term Ādi tāla stood in ancient times for the present day Eka tāla, i.e., consisting of only one āṅga, viz. The Caturaśra laghu (vide Saṅgitaratnākara-V-261).

However, traditionally this composition has been handed down to us, over more than a century and a half, as set in Eka tāla, in practical usage, in spite of the fact that the Sampradāyapradarśinī mentioned it as Ādi tāla as early as 1904: I learnt this composition in 1940 from the late mahāvidvān Śrī K. Ponnaiya Pillai, when he was living in Captain Krishnasvami Road, Triplicane, Madras. (This Ponnaiya Pillai was the grandson of the original Ponnaiya Pillai, the direct disciple of Dikṣita). He told me he had learnt it from Subbarāma Dikṣita himself, as set in Eka tāla. Now, Subbarāma Dikṣita learnt Dikṣita’s compositions from Balusvāmi Dikṣita, who had, in his turn, learnt them directly from their composer, Dikṣita himself.

Well, the upshot of this link-up of sequence is this: Dikṣita, while originally composing these kṛtis, praying to Lords Śrī Bṛhaspati and Śanaīścara for mercy on his (Dikṣita’s) ailing pupil Tambiyappan, had not envisaged the future possible turn of his composing similar kṛtis in praise of the other graha devatas as well, and conceived the structure of the Śani graha kṛti definitely in Ādi tāla. And his disciples recorded it down as such.

But, later when, on the request of his disciples, he launched upon a planned project of composing kṛtis in praise of the other

¹ मानान्ने काकक्रियायां ताकविरामोपकक्षिते काकव्यापारे च ॥

graha devatas also, he set about arranging them in their order, aligning with the order of the sulādi sapta tālas, in accordance with his usual innate urge to set down and link up pertinent features of the topic he treats of in the sāhitya of his compositions. And with his acumen of arraying component details regularly in their pristine positions, he has had later to direct his disciples to render it in Eka tāla (the seventh of the sulādi sapta tālas: श्रीकरसम-पत्तिसुरशङ्खविदलमानाः) for the kṛti on the seventh graha devata, for which no restructuring was needed (as the present-day Eka tāla is exactly half of the present-day Ādi tāla), as the shape-up of the Eka tāla rendition of the Ādi tāla composition yielded prototype and archetype alignment.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the yati-prāsa set-up of consecutive pādas of the sāhitya unmistakably reflects its having been originally conceived in Ādi tāla. Further, in his kṛtis in Eka tāla, he uses only the Tryasra jāti, the khaṇḍa jāti and the Mīśra jāti and not the Caturaśra jāti. And in such Eka tāla kṛtis also, the pāda consists of two lines of two āvarttas each, i.e., a total of four āvarttas; and hence the first and second āvarttas have yati between them, and the third and fourth have it. But here in this kṛti, looked at as in Eka tāla, the entire line is an unbroken whole, and doesn't have the demarcating yati in the middle as in the case of the other Eka tāla kṛtis. Whereas, just in the same pattern as in the other Ādi tāla kṛtis, the pāda in this kṛti consists of two lines of one āvartta each; and hence the first line and the second alone (i.e., the first āvartta and the second) have the yati.

Decidedly this kṛti is Dikṣita's masterpiece in Yadukulakāmbhoji and one of the best compositions in the rāga. But when there are the kṛtis "E tāvuna" and "Nī dayace" of Tyāgarāja and the superb svarajati "Kāmākṣi" of Śyāmā Śāstrin, one should hesitate to say that this is the best composition in Yadukulakāmbhoji. That it belongs to his mature years is patent on the face of it. Being typically in his matchless, scholarly style and cauka kāla, it naturally fails to attract the uninitiated and impatient listener in the first rendering, however polished that rendering may be, though it is widely sung.

One should not forget that it is these two magnificent compositions, "Bṛhaspate" and "Divākaratanujam" that served as the precursors of Dikṣita's kṛtis on the other graha devatas: Because these two kṛtis were had as the vara prasāda of the all-merciful guru that Dikṣita was, on the spur of unalloyed करुणा—

करुणाज्ञानविनयाः प्रयासश्चक्षमातथा ।

पञ्चकं शर्मशान्तिप्रदाचार्यकृष्णं स्मृतम् ॥

So also, just as the world of philosophic aspirations cannot afford to forget Arjuna, who was instrumental in evoking Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to shower on the ardent spiritual seekers His grace in the shape of the Bhagavadgīta, the music world should be all gratitude to Śuddhamaddalam Tambiyappan, to save whom the grace of the guru blossomed in the shape of these two gems of musical composition, which paved the way for the kṛtis of the divine master composer on the other graha devatas also, serving for ever as a superhuman panacea for all human ills.

JAI ŚRĪ GURUGUHA,
JAI ŚRĪ DIKṢITA.

Cultural Round about - Bombay

By

Dr. SULOCHANA RAJENDRAN

If memory serves right it was way back in the forties when at the Pallavi test (practical) for the Sangeetha Bhushanam course of the Annamalai University, a young examinee was given the refrain "Saama ganna lolane, Sadasivane" for extemporisation in Hindolam set to Tripura Talam. Off darted the Pallavi enunciation in a swarakshara mould and the young musician sang with gusto playing the pallavi with all possible octaval swarakshara darts. The picture emerged with graphic precision, a marvel for so young an examinee (such were the standards then of examinations and examinees).

Tanjore Sankara Iyer

Again who is not enchanted by the Ranjani ragamalika stringing Ranjani, Sriranjani, Megaranjani and Janaranjani with an exquisite Chittaswara that progressively adds swaras of the various Ranjanis? But how many know its composer as that extemporiser who showed his creative zest even as a 'varsity examinee'—Tanjavur Sankara Iyer? Quite a number of his kritis including the popular "Geeta Vaadya Natana Natakapriyai" (Natakapriya) have enriched the performer's repertoire. A self-effacing introvert who has not been bit by the performing bug but has involved himself in his creative explorations and content with his teaching mission, Sankara Iyer is a mine of creative excellence with ready reckoning to musical nuances. No stickler for grammar, yet a tradition-

alist who draws on intuition, the feel of a musical phrase, sangathi or sahitaya in their graceful flow.

A Refined artist

The maestros's visit to the city for a series of lecture-demonstrations were of good educative value. The one at the Shanmukhananda Sangeetha Sabha following the Sabha's felicitations (he is nearing sixty) was an enlightenment. Sankara Iyer's interpretation of Natai, its reliance on Gandhara and little relation to Shatshruthi nuances in the Tyagaraja school was thought-provoking. As an example he rendered "Ninne Bhajana". There is no Gambhira Natai as a raga, he argued. Saveri whose Rishaba was as near to Shadja as to be almost shadja (Saveri was an intelligent pointer), Main Varali in pracheena paddati was another revelation.

To him swaraprastharas formed as much an integral part of Kṛti rendition as a separate embellishment. The smooth-fashioned 'Saukhyam', the felicitous spontaneity in his swaraprastharas in "Santhamuleka" (Saama) could well serve as an inspiration to youngsters who are more and more attracted by the percussion oriented technical jaunts that it is made of. How much could students benefit if institutions organise such demonstrations as part of the curriculum!

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Another enlightening event was Sandhyavandanam Sreenivasa Rao's lecture at the same venue. A scholar-performer who successfully stewarded the Central College of Carnatic Music at Madras, Srinivasa Rao is the repository of some rare old compositions of saints and masters and his method of enunciation, be it in lecture or in performance, had a clarity of thought and approach.

Tribute to Bala

Bunched with this lecture was the Prayer meeting organised under the lead of Rajarajeswari Kala Mandir at the B. J. Hall where connoisseurs, eminent gurus and performing veterans paid their tributes to the one and only Bala. Thanks to Babubhai Raja, one of Bala's hosts in Bombay, the assemblage could hear Bala's renditions of her celebrated 'Krishna nee begane' (Yamuna Kalyani): Sung in Thumri fashion, the padam was touching, the vinyasa in soulful vilambakala conjured up visions of her visual interpretation. No doubt she held music as inseparable from dance and was as much a 'Kalanidhi' in sangita as she was in dance; no wonder the Madras Music Academy conferred the prestigious title on her.

Youth to the Fore

The opening series of the monthly performances at Shanmukhananda this year by the all young instrumental quintet - flautists Raghu and Ravi flanked by melodist-violinist M. Nagaraj from Bangalore, mridangist Bhaktavatsalam who is steadily forging to the top and new-comer Suresh on the ghatam was one rooted in classicism yet mingling youthful gusto with devotion and depth.

The Brothers have struck a graceful vilambakala stride in raga essays and Kriti renditions and though prone to rhythmic

exercises in swaraprastharas, there is no overdoing it. Ravi's Nagaswaravali and Kalyani were examples of evocative delineations with graceful pauses and sensitive phrasings. Raghu rather took mere, halts for total pauses that were not sustained with nuances. And their kritis could be toned up in rendition for sangathees have a definite scheme melodically and thematically. Mere tying up of swara-based sangathi mars aesthetics and fails to do justice to the purpose of the kriti structure. Some superfluous sangathees in "Samaja Varagamana" (Hindolam) and "Ethavunara" (Kalyani) could well have been eschewed.

Alleppy Venkatesan - Rising Artist

Hearing him after quite some years, this writer found Alleppy Venkatesan having made pleasant strides in maturity of concert presentation. Follower of the Ariyakudi school, there was adequate reliance on lilting madhyamakala whether in kriti rendition or pallavi enunciation. A straight good voice facilitated his communicative approach and articulation which registered well. And departing from the jargonised Swara patterns added to the pleasantness of the concert. Very promising.

The fare comprised choice kritis such as Poochi Iyengar's rare find "Sri Rama Nannu Brova" (Bilahari), "Palintsu Kamakshi" (Madhyamavathi), "Manasu Swadhinamina" (Sankarabharanam) "Raghavane Saranam" (Sahana) among others. Venkatesan's Bilahari and Sankarabharanam glowed in their traditional colours while Madhyamavathi and Saveri throve on a more explorative and evocative stance. Accompanists Dwaram Mangathayaru (violin) beautifully picked up the strands in alapanas and gave a sweet touch of her own in the solo strips.

but was not quite at ease in swaras spun at odd eduppus. For Master Praveen (mridangist) it was graduation from the mini (where a few weeks back he accompanied Suma Sudhindra—Veena) to the main auditorium. A promising artiste with clear strokes and clean combinations, he played displaying thrust and good anticipation.

Malavika Sarukkai

Among young Bharata Natyam exponents emerging steadfast as a professional, Malavika Sarukkai, a refined artiste in Odissi too, is a sure second-liner. Her recital at the Shanmukhananda in February was intensely laya based. The numbers had quite some decorative facades of nritta though nuances of a pure expression were not overlooked. Her mastery over nritta and the natural ease with which she danced covered up even the repetitive poses and stances which would have otherwise caused monotony.

Guru Swamimalai Rajaratnam's choreographic ingenuity was discernible in Annamacharya's Dasavathara keertana, where decorative motifs of nritta were deployed to unfold episodes connected with the avatharas. Vibrant solkattus and virtuosic 'viniyogam' marked the Useni Swarajathi "Emaayalaadira" in which a blend of lokadharmi with natyadharmi was noticeable.

Malavika's penchant for character visualisation came forth in "Ramonamah" harmonising melody with mime. The Kalyanavasantham Tillana, almost a patent of hers, was done with aplomb.

Sucheta's Fine Effort

In her efforts to popularise Bharata Natyam among locals, Shucheta (Bhide)

Chapekar's latest bid has been to choreograph Natya Sangeet in dance depiction. And it was quite a refreshing endeavour when she presented select numbers such as "Bala Sagara" (Bhimplasi), "Harasikha" (Yaman Kalyan) and "Naahi mi boolata Natha" (Pilu) at a fund raising performance for the Shiv Sikshan Saunsta at Shanmukhananda Hall in February. The themes were mostly around Krishna legend which admitted of Lokadharmi overtones and suited the light music shades in the Natya Sangeet. The visual impact was heightened to a great extent by a melodious rendition by Vijaya Joglekar.

Where it concerned the more vital number of the art form Varnam, "Harika Kapate" depicting a Kalagakhandita nayika, the nuances of Marathi lyrics could not dovetail into the purely Karnataka gamakas so essential for a raga like Ananda Bhairavi,

A Triumph of Spirit

It was an encouraging comeback when Sudha Chandran tided over her physical handicap and gave a Bharata Natyam recital in January with a 'Jaipur foot' thanks to that peerless Magsaysay awardee Dr. Sethi of Jaipur, who has helped many a disabled to return to normalcy.

No faulty footwork nor any flimsy movement; but the same zeal and devotion as before. Years of dedication and training under Guru Ramaswamy Bhagavathar of Nrityasindhu has brought about a maturity, an innate involvement in her expressions and her nritta glowed in their restraint and roundedness.

A certain amount of overdramatisation apart, which has become common among young aspirants, here exposition of

Varnam in Sriranjani was an exacting piece done with verve and vigour. However the brilliant piece that evening was Meenakshi Pancharatnam, a touching blend of goddess's grace and the devotee's yearnings.

Shanti Krishnan

Another dance recital that left its impact was that of Shanti Krishnan who had proved her mettle even as a child artiste. Graceful and elegant, the fare was bhava laden. An experienced cine artiste as well, she performed at the Asthika Samaj for the Thai Poosam festival to the delight of rasikas.

Her joyful nritta found full expression in the Pantuvarali Varnam "Balagopalam" spun around prankster little Krishna. With subtle histrionics she evoked the pathos in

"Charanam Charanam" (Saurashtram), a Ramanataka Keerthana of Arunachala Kavi. And she finely brought forth the Tandava-Lasya contrast in "Ananda Natanamaaduvar" (Purvi Kalyani).

Homage to Purandara

Among the Aradhanas observed by the city sabhas, one meriting special attention was that devoted to Sangita Pitamaha organised at the mini-auditorium of Shanmukhananda. The highlight was group singing of Purandaradasa sahityas set to music by veteran Alathur Panchapakesa Iyer, Principal of Bharatiya Music School. The book "Sri Purandara Ganamritham" with notation published by the Principal covers 51 of the bard's devarnamas with authentic sahitya and pronunciation. A worthwhile possession for every musician and institution.



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Cultural Scene in Karnataka

By

T. B. NARASIMHACHAR, Bangalore.

It is strange but true that, while on the one hand attendance at classical music concerts, particularly in Bangalore, has been dwindling, thanks perhaps to the lure of the 'Idiot Box', the number of celebrations in which classical music is discussed and presented is on the increase. This may perhaps speak of the existence of particular group/s of music lovers who patronise music concerts. Right from the beginning of the year when the Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat held its 14th Musicians' conference, a spate of music Seminars have continued to be held, in the form of Purandaradasa, Tyagaraja and Raghavendraswami Aradhanas, lasting almost till the commencement of the Sri Ramanavami series.

Academy Awards

The Karnataka Sangita Nritya Academy had arranged an 8-day Art festival at the Chowdiah Memorial hall, involving Carnatic and Hindusthani music, Dance and Sugam Sangit programmes, mostly by young artistes, during the first week of December 1983. On this occasion A. V. Narayanappa, 70 years old Nagaswara vidwan—a disciple of late P. N. Angappa Pillay of Tamil Nadu - who has specialised in the playing of Mukhaveena - a mini Nagaswaram; M. S. Ramaiah, a senior Mridanga vidwan; Basavaraj Bendegeri - a Hindusthani music Tablaji; C. Radhakrishna, a dance teacher; R. N.

Joshi, a Hindusthani vocalist and Mysore Ananthaswami, a popular singer of Sugam Sangit all received the annual Academy awards for 1983-4. On the inaugural evening a book of 'Who is Who' in Karnataka in Carnatic music entitled 'Namma Sangita Kalavidaru' - containing the biodata of about 226 musicians of this state, prepared by this writer and published by the Academy, was released by Dr. Gangubai Hangal, President of the Academy.

Musicians' conference

The 14th Musicians' conference and music festival arranged by the Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat for 5 days between the 4th and 8th of January 1984 drew a good response from the public. It was presided over by a popular vocalist Sri A. Subba Rao, who received the title 'Gana Kala Bhushana.' A new Kannada book on music 'Haridasa Keerthana Swaravali, edited and published by M. R. Shankaramurthi, was also released on the occasion.

During the morning academic sessions as many as 10 subjects were discussed by way of reading of papers and lecture demonstrations. Except in one case all the participants belonged to this State. The audience participation during the questions and answers' sessions was significant. Ananthapadmanabha Rao of Mysore, a

grandson of veena Padmanabhaiah played on veena some compositions of his grandfather. Smt. H. S. Anasuya, who spent some years in Indonesia, gave a lecture demonstration regarding Indonesian musical instruments and how she succeeded in playing Carnatic music on them. She selected 'Anklung' - a bamboo instrument which has to be shaken to produce tinkling musical sounds- and explained that this instrument required a number of persons to play it, in fact as many as there are notes. She demonstrated the technique single-handedly, by playing krithis in Hamsadhvani and Sunadavinodini by fixing the Anklungs to a horizontal frame. She also played a flutelike instrument 'Suling' while her son accompanied her on a Jews-harp-like instrument called 'Gengong.' She gave a similar demonstration at the Music Academy's annual conference recently at Madras.

Abhinaya demonstrated

Kumari Umamaheswari, great grand daughter of Veena Dhanammal demonstrated 'Abhinaya in Bharathanatya' with Smt. Mukta rendering the padams very evocatively, assisted by Smt. Nirmala Soundararajan. D. B. Harindra, a Hindurthani vocalist, sang some select ragas with common swara ingredients to point out that they acquire different characteristics by shifting the accent on the pivotal notes. Kannada canticles of Nijaguna Shiva yogi were sung melodiously by Kowlandi Shivanna. K. Bhaskaran gave an illustrated talk on computer music.

Sangita Saaramrutha

As was to be expected, Dr. R. Satyana rayana's talk on 'Sangita Saaramrutha' of

Tulajaji was erudite with copious references from the original. He pointed out that this 250 years old book is a link between past and present music - in fact a ladder contemplating Lakshya-Lakshana samanyaya as the king was a Vaggeyakara in his own right, who knew Hindustani music also. He was a multifaceted personality who knew Ayurveda, Mantra Sastra, etc. The prevalence of Suladis and Devaranamas in his times is evidenced in his works. He was the originator of the present day Saraswathi Veena.

Musical affinity

B. M. Sundaram, Producer of Music in the A. I. R. Pondicherry, presented many unknown and interesting facts during his talk on the 'Musical affinity between Mysore and Tamil Nadu. Many musicians of yore were patronised by the Mysore Rulers. Veena Venkatasubbiah, Sadasiva Rao, Sonti Venkatasubbiah, Chinna Vaithi, Peria Vaithi, Lalgudi Ramayyar, Veena Kuppaiah, Ulsoor Krishna Iyer, and so on. Dr. S. Ramaswami, a Professor in a local Medical college and son of Smt. Lalithabai Shamanna of Madras, discussed the voice mechanism in sound production, its functions, limitations, etc., in his paper on 'Musical enunciation and diction on vocal music'. Geetha Bennett, daughter of Dr. S. Ramanathan, dispelled many illusions cherished by our musicians visiting U. S. A. It was a frank advice as to how to handle the subject. On the concluding day, some senior artistes in Harikatha, Harmonium, Gamaka, Saxophone, and vocal music were felicitated. The music

concerts in the eventngs were held in three sessions to accommodate junior sub-senior performers. Only T. N. Seshagopalan, and Geetha Bennett (veena) were the visiting artists.

Purandaradasa Aradhana

During the month of January various musical institutions and music teachers celebrated Aradhanas of Sri Purandaradasa and Sri Tyagaraja. The Purandara Seva Samithi, Bangalore, took three busloads of musicians to Hampi for a 3-day celebration of the Saint of Karnataka. The Karnataka Sangita Nritya Academy held a 5-day celebration for Sri Purandaradasa at Mysore during which more than 40 performances were arranged for the exclusive singing of the compositions of the saint.

Youth Festival

Under the joint auspices of the Youth Writers and Artistes Guild and the Sangita Nritya Academy, an ambitious 'Yuvajana Sangita Nrityaotsava' was celebrated for 8 days at the State Youth Centre, Bangalore. It provided one-hour programme opportunities to the younger generation of musicians and dancers to establish their credo before the discerning public, in Hindurthani, Carnataki, Sugam Sangit, and Bharathanatya. It also held a Seminar on the relevance of classical music and dance in the presentday social context! and 'Music and dance education - Yesterday,

Today and Tomorrow' and these drew enough fire from the participants. There were two conventions on the 'Problems of Dance and music fields and solutions thereto' and 'Facilities required for musicians and dancers'. There were lecture demonstrations on 'Avadhana Pallavi', 'Contemporary thoughts in classical dance'.

The early part of this year witnessed the passing away of T. M. Puttaswamiah or Moogayya as he was popularly called, a veteran Asthana vidwan, N. Chennakesaviah, another Asthana vidwan and member of the Experts committee of the Music Academy, Madras, L. S. Seshagiri Rao, an Advocate-musician, disciple of the late Pudukottai Dakshinamurthi Pillai and B. V. Seetha, a popular vocalist and staff artiste of the A.I.R. Bangalore. This and the passing away of the 'Suprema dance-seuse' of this century-Smt. Balasaraswathi cast a gloom on cultural circles in this state.

The Raghavendra Seva Samithi, Malleswaram celebrated its Silver Jubilee in a grand manner with the Governor of Karnataka inaugurating the festival. This institution situated in the Swimming Pool Extension of Bangalore has been rendering yeoman service in fostering cultural activities both by itself and by other institutions, giving it a religious and secular turn.

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Letter from Kerala*

The 137th Aradhana of Tyagaraja

By

S. NATARAJAN, TRIVANDRUM.

Sri Swati Tirunal Sangita Sabha, Trivandrum, celebrated the 137th Tyagaraja Aradhana Festival with great enthusiasm during January 26th to 29th 1984. It was a memorable treat to the music lovers of Trivandrum who had assembled in large numbers at the Karthika Thirunal Theatre on all those days, to immerse themselves in Tyagaraja's unique music. The meaningful rituals associated with Tyagaraja Aradhana were observed in faithful fashion.

It was a tremendous achievement for the Sabha that it could make such stalwarts of Carnatic Music as D. K. Jayaraman, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Dr. S. Ramathan, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Vellore Ramabhadran, Parur M. S. Anantharaman, B. V. Raman and B. V. Lakshmanan involve themselves fully, not only in their respective roles but also with the Aradhana proper.

Devotees' Music

The Sabha afforded full opportunity during the four days of the Festival to all the local musicians and instrumentalists, amateur and professional, young and old, to pay their homage to the Sadguru by

rendering his kirtanas. Each person was allowed to render two kritis of Tyagaraja. It was a rare experience to see the violin maestro Lalgudi cast himself in the role of a vocalist. He sang "Daya Che Rama Ni" (Yadukula Kamboji) and "Raga Ratna Malikache" (Ritigoula) to the violin accompaniment of his favourite disciple, Babu Narayanan of Trivandrum. Vellore Ramabhadran, the Mridangam maestro, also surprised everybody by his effective vocal rendering of "Aparama Bhakti" (Panthuravali) and "Ramabhirama Manasu (Dhanyasi). It was a great credit to the Sabha that about eighty artists participated in this most delightful programme. Incidentally, it also brought out the talents of promising young musicians like Vamanan Namboothiri, Sreekumar and Madhu, all students of the Swati Tirunal Music College, Trivandrum.

Strict Observance of Rituals

On Sunday, January 29th 'Unchavritti' procession, with Nagaswaram accompaniment, started from the theatre at 7-30 a.m. led by Lalgudi Jayaraman, Vellore Ramabhadran and the executive Committee members of the Sabha and

* This will be a regular feature hereafter—Ed.

accompanied by a host of Sangita Vidwans and 'aswadakas'.

When the procession came back to the theatre after going round the streets, the Aradhana commenced with the flute recital of Sivaramakrishnan. The Pancharatna Kritis were rendered in an atmosphere of deep spiritual fervour by a chorus of about 35 vocalists and instrumentalists such as Lalgudi Jayaraman, D. K. Jayaraman, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Vellore Ramabhadran, Parur M. S. Anantharaman besides local vidwans like Neyyathinkara Vasudevan and Chalakudy Narayanaswamy. The chorus was led by the vidwans B. V. Raman, and B. V. Lakshmanan.* For the benefit of the innumerable music lovers who could not be actually present at the Aradhana, All India Radio, Trivandrum relayed the music live from the theatre.

Music Programmes

There was variety and richness in the music fare offered at this festival. In all eight concerts were held during the four days of the festival. There were five brilliant vocal performances, presented by T. V. Sankaranarayanan (Lalgudi-Violin, Vellore Ramabhadran-Mridangam); Madurai G. S. Mani (Tiruparkadal Veeraraghavan-Violin, Umayalpuram-Mridangam); D. K. Jayaraman (Parur M. S. Anantharaman-Violin, Umayalpuram - Mridangam); Dr. S Ramnathan (Lalgudi G. R. Krishnan - Violin; Vellore Ramabhadran - Mridangam) and B. V. Raman & B. V. Lakshmanan (Parur M. S. Anantharaman - Violin and Palghat Rajamony - Mridangam). The two instru-

* Vide Pictures at Back Cover Page.

mental performances were by G. S. Sreekrishna (Flute) with Tiruparkadal Veeraraghavan (Violin) and B. Doraiswamy (Mridangam); and by the Lalgudis, father and son, a memorable violin duet with Karaikudi Mani accompanying on the Mridangam. The concluding performance was a "Harikatha Kalakshepam" rendered by Mannargudi Sambasiva Bhagavatar on 'Ramadasa's Tyagaraja'.

A Rare Treat

All the performances maintained a very high standard and the music lovers of Trivandrum were indeed fortunate to savour more than seventy Tyagaraja compositions rendered by these front-rank artists. Such rarely heard Kritis as 'Munnu Ravana' (Todi), 'Mati Mati' (Mohanam) "Rama Bana Trana" (Saveri), "Lali Lali Yena" (Harikamboji) "Saraseerahasana Rama" (Mukhari) were heard. Madurai G. S. Mani, was quite new to the Trivandrum audience but his singing was a delightful experience. He is gifted with a superb 'sarira' and used his assets well.

Tyagaraja Symposium

An outstanding feature of this festival was the Tyagaraja symposium organised by the Sabha on January 26. Many sangita vidwans and rasikas were presented at this function which was inaugurated by Shri. K. C. Sankaranarayanan, I.A.S. The Sabha was extremely fortunate in having Dr. R. Krishnaswamy, an erudite scholar and musicologist and above all an ardent Tyagaraja devotee, (who lost his eyesight in middle age) to lead the deliberations. He had studied music in

Kalakshetra under eminent Vidwans like Tiger Varadachariar. In his learned discourse lasting more than an hour, Dr. Krishnaswamy mentioned that Thyagaraja was an adept in infusing the apt 'bhava' and 'rasa' into his compositions. He was supreme master in the employment of 'alankaras' like Dvitheeyakshara Prasas and in the use of synonyms. Many of his 'kritis' are vibrant with effect. Dr. Krishnaswamy compared the music of Tyagaraja to the most attractive packing material for delivering the precious contents of our music. Thyagaraja composed music in 210 ragas. More than half of these ragas were his own making. He was the first to render "Lakshana geetas" in these ragas coming under fortytwo 'melas'. The wide gamut of his creativity, Dr. Krishnaswamy averred, is reflected in the kritis ranging from the Pancha Ratnas to the very simple Divya Namavalis. Tyagaraja was the first to introduce 'Sangatis' in musical composition with a view to elaborating their scope and bringing out their meaning forcefully. Dr. Krishnaswamy emphasised all these points by rendering various kritis of Tyagabrahmam.

According to Dr. Krishnaswamy Vedanta Desika, who has been hailed as "SARVA THANTHRA SWATANTHRA", was reborn as Tyagaraja to propound the philosophy of 'Visishtadwaita'. He elaborated this theme by a detailed discussion of the contents of Tyagaraja's divine compositions. Dr. Krishnaswamy concluded by saying that a mere reading of the Tyagaraja kritis will clear all our moral doubts and will afford the necessary solace to troubled minds.

After the brilliant 'upanyasam' of Mannargudi Sambasiva Bhagavathar on January 29, Anjaneya Aradhana was celebrated with the rendering of "Geetharthamu" (Suruti) by Sambasiva Bhagavathar, B. V. Raman & B. V. Lakshmanan, Parur M. S. Anantha Raman and other devotees.

Well Done A. I. R.

The All India Trivandrum, did a creditable thing by broadcasting the daily programmes from 9.30 P.m. to 10.45 p.m. every evening from the theatre.



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Letters to the Editor

Sir,

I have been a regular reader of this magazine and it has made me richer each time, by reading the very informative articles that find a place in the magazine. I was particularly impressed by the articles in recent issues, those of Prof. Trichy Sankaran and Sri S. Ramachandran Laya - Tala.

Articles on Laya/Tala or material regarding the percussion instruments are rarely available for the information of interested readers. The article on 'Time Beats' provides good information on the mridangam. One might say in the absence of a good and understanding mridangist, even the best efforts of a vocal musician would fail to create appropriate effects on the audience. May 'SHANMUKHA' continue its service of educating the music lovers on the finer aspects of music with good articles.

Pune - 11

Yours etc.

S. KALYANARAMAN

Sir,

I am very happy to note that the SHANMUKHA magazine is maintaining a high standard. The articles, noticeably are authored by people who are experts on the subject and who are cultured enough to pass their knowledge on to others interested to know and learn about music and the performing arts.

The following articles that have appeared in the magazine were of a high quality and I hope similar articles will find a place in your future issues :

1. Sathguru Sri Thyagararaja - Jan. 83
2. Folk Music of Karnataka - July 83
3. Time Beats - July 83
4. It's but Gita-Pancharatna - Oct. 83
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